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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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WB tribunals disposed of 6K of 25L SIR appeals

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

The SIR-linked appellate tribunals in West Bengal have disposed of only 6,581 cases, about 0.26 per cent of nearly 25 lakh appeals filed against decisions by judicial officers during electoral roll revision, official data showed on Thursday. Of the cases decided by 12 tribunals till 14 May, 4,043 appeals were allowed, with 61.5 per cent of these making it back to the voters' list, while 1,267 were rejected. The status of over 1,200 remaining cases was unclear. The tribunals were constituted on 20 March, following Supreme Court directives for an appellate mechanism. Kolkata North and South accounted for 1,777 disposals, around 27 per cent of the total, headed by retired Calcutta High Court Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam, who resigned on 7 May. Murshidabad and Malda reported low disposal figures, with 112 and 185 appeals respectively, out of over 6.29 lakh and 5.26 lakh filed. Hearings were conducted both online and offline, with official figures indicating around 10,000 appeals disposed of so far. The Supreme Court had directed judicial intervention over trust issues in the electoral roll process. —*PTI*

India to host Quad meeting on 26 May

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The foreign ministers of the Quad nations will meet in India to discuss the West Asia crisis and Indo-Pacific issues. Attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the meeting will be presided over by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. The ministers will build on the July 2025 discussions in Washington, reviewing progress on initiatives and regional developments. They will also hold bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Quad, comprising India, the US, Australia, and Japan, focuses on peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific, with the upcoming agenda likely shaping the later summit in India. —*PTI*

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Centre tells SC: Will bring back 4 deported to B'desh

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Centre informed the Supreme Court it plans to repatriate some individuals previously deported to Bangladesh for citizenship verification. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta stated, "The government would bring them back and examine their status," noting it may take 8-10 days. The court was hearing a plea challenging a 2025 Calcutta High Court order that set aside the deportation decision. The court allowed the entry of Sunali Khatun and her child on humanitarian grounds in December 2025. The case involves families detained and pushed across borders, with the high court criticising the deportation process as conducted "in hot haste," breaching protocols. —*PTI*

IMD forecasts 'severe' heatwaves over parts of India

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are likely to persist over the plains of northwest India, Central and East India, and parts of Peninsular India during the next six to seven days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

The IMD stated that heatwave conditions are likely in isolated areas of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh from 22 May to 28 May.

It added that heatwave conditions could prevail in isolated pockets over Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh, and Delhi during the same period.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday announced revised working hours for all Punjab government offices, schools, and colleges, in the slot of 7.30 am to 1.30 pm, starting 25 May and remaining in place until further notice.

He added that since data shows that peak power demand begins after 1 pm, the new office hours will help ease strain on the state's power infrastructure.

Heatwaves are also likely in parts of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

Furthermore, warm night conditions are expected in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Vidarbha, Odisha, and Telangana. —*PTI*

- Schools and govt offices in Punjab will close at 1.30pm, as temperatures in several states cross 40 °C. The Centre urged citizens to use electricity "judiciously" amid record demand

RBI gives govt record ₹2.87 lakh cr payout

Amid disruptions due to West Asia conflict, RBI hopes dividends cushion falling Rupee

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Reserve Bank on Friday announced a record dividend of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the government for the year-ended March 2026, providing a financial boost for the exchequer amid rising import bills and supply chain disruptions due to the West Asia conflict.

The dividend is 6.7 per cent higher than Rs 2.69 lakh crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The RBI said in a statement that its net income, before risk provision and transfer to statutory funds, aggregated Rs 3.96 lakh crore in FY26 as against Rs 3.13 lakh crore in FY25.

"The balance sheet of the Bank expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore as on 31 March, 2026," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

The RBI's Central Board of Directors, at its meeting under the Chairmanship of Governor Sanjay Malhotra, reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook, and also approved the dividend.

The revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF) provides flexibility to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) between the range of 4.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the size of the balance sheet.

> **(Oil markets) may be entering the red zone in July or August if we don't see that there are some improvements in the (Strait of Hormuz) situation**
>
> —Fatih Birol, International Energy Agency head. 'Red zone' implies an elevated financial crisis driven by credit deficits

"Taking into consideration the current macroeconomic factors, financial performance of the Bank and maintenance of appropriate risk buffers, the Central Board decided to transfer Rs 1,09,379.64 crore towards the CRB for FY 2025-26 as against Rs 44,861.70 crore in the previous year," it said. The CRB at 6.5 per cent of the size of the RBI balance sheet, compared to 7.5 per cent for 2024-25.

India meets about 88 per cent of its crude oil needs through imports, and the West Asia crisis has sent prices of energy ,fertilisers and other commodities skyrocketing. —*PTI*

U'KHAND LEMONS COST ₹250/KG, PANEER ₹400/KG

Dehradun has joined several Indian cities facing a sharp spike in the cost of essential commodities due to inflation triggered by the war in West Asia. Retail prices of staples like onions and tomatoes have climbed by Rs 5 to Rs 6 per kilogram, while premium fruits such as apples and pomegranates have become costlier by up to Rs 50 per kilogram. Lemon prices have skyrocketed to nearly Rs 250 per kilogram. Fruit and dairy businesses are suffering, as a result, say local tradesmen. One said that the price of curd has increased from Rs 100 to Rs 120 per kilogram, and that of paneer from Rs 400 to Rs 440 per kilogram.

If parents are IAS officers, should kids get reservation, asks SC

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday questioned the continued grant of reservation benefits to children of economically and educationally advanced families within backward classes. The court remarked that if the parents of students are in good jobs with handsome incomes, then the children should get out of reservation.

"If both parents are IAS officers, why should they have reservations? With educational and economic empowerment, there is social mobility," a bench comprising of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan remarked.

They were hearing a plea challenging a Karnataka High Court judgment which upheld the exclusion of the petitioner, whose parents are both State government employees, from reservation.

"To seek reservation for the children, we will never get out of it," the bench observed while issuing notice in the matter.

"For the Economically Weaker Section and Disadvantaged Group, there is no social backwardness but only economic backwardness. There has to be some balance. Socially and educationally backward, yes, but once the parents have attained a level because of taking advantage of reservation," the bench said.

The petitioner had been selected as assistant engineer in Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited under the reserved category. However, the District Caste and Income Verification Committee denied him a caste validity certificate after concluding he belonged to the "creamy layer".

Authorities said the combined annual income of the parents exceeded the Rs 8 lakh creamy layer threshold. As a result, the petitioner's caste certificate identifying him as belonging to the Kuruba community was revoked. —*PTI*

Muslim side moves SC on Bhojshala

The Muslim side has moved the Supreme Court of India challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court's order declaring the disputed Bhojshala Complex in Dhar as a temple. While the Hindu side claims that the structure is a temple of Goddess Saraswati, the Muslim side maintains that it is the Kamal Maula mosque. The Muslim community will not offer prayers there on 23 May.

SC grants 2 Delhi riot accused bail

The Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail for six months to two Delhi riots accused, Abdul Khalid Saifi and Tasleem Ahmad, while justifying denial of bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam. It said that upon evaluation, the latter appeals did not justify overriding the statutory embargo. Saifi and Ahmad were asked not to speak publicly about the case.

NCERT BOOK ROW: SC MODIFIES ORDER ON 3 ACADEMICS

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday modified its 11 March order directing governments and public institutions to disassociate from three academics involved in drafting an NCERT Class 8 social science chapter criticised as "offensive" for references to corruption in the judiciary.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant recalled its earlier observation that academics Michel Danino, Suparna Diwakar and Alok Prasanna Kumar had "deliberately and knowingly misrepresented facts" to project the judiciary negatively before students.

The court said its earlier remarks were directed at the textbook content, not the individuals. It also left it to the Centre, states, Union Territories and publicly funded institutions to independently decide whether to continue associating with the academics.

The order came while hearing a plea filed by the three academics, who argued that the textbook chapter was prepared collectively and no single individual controlled its contents.

Earlier, the apex court had banned further publication and circulation of the chapter and directed formation of an expert committee to review NCERT legal studies curriculum for middle and higher classes. —*PTI*

NDA may lose 1 seat as EC issues dates for RS polls

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Election Commission on Friday announced polls for 26 Rajya Sabha seats across 10 states on 18 June, following the retirement of members between 21 June and 19 July. Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda and Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Digvijaya Singh are among those retiring.

Polling will take place in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. By-polls for one Rajya Sabha seat each from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were also announced.

The NDA is likely to lose one seat overall, while the Congress-led opposition may gain three seats. Of the 26 seats going to polls, the NDA currently holds 18, Congress four, JMM one and YSRCP three. Projections indicate the NDA may secure 17 seats, Congress five, JMM two and TVK one. The NDA presently has 149 MPs in the 244-member Rajya Sabha. —*PTI*

'Smart border' with Pak, B'desh to curb crossings

NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the government will launch a tech-enabled "smart border" project by 2027 to make the 6,000-km fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh impenetrable and ensure that the "conspiracy" to change the demography of the country is defeated.

Delivering the annual Rustamji Memorial lecture hosted by the Border Security Force (BSF) here, Shah said the "smart border" will use technology, drones, radars and smart cameras.

Shah said these fronts (about 1,289 km with Pakistan and 4,096 km with Bangladesh) cannot be guarded with "traditional" methods as they are "vulnerable" and a "cause of concern" for the country's security.

He said these borders currently face threats like illegal infiltration; cattle, drugs and arms smuggling; fake Indian currency notes and organised crime. He asked BSF troops to communicate with local administrations to identify infiltrators and plug border gaps.

Border security should not be seen in isolation but as a "territorial responsibility" involving all agencies and state governments, Shah added. He said the current Bharatiya Janata Party-led state governments in Tripura, West Bengal and Assam believe in a no-infiltration policy. His ministry, Shah added, will soon hold a meeting with their chief ministers on the subject. —*PTI*

Apis cerana, Malabar tree toad to be K'taka symbols

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre announced on Friday that the process to officially designate Apis cerana as the State insect and the Malabar tree toad as the State amphibian was underway. Speaking on International Day for Biological Diversity, he highlighted the importance of national symbols for biodiversity conservation. The State has already declared sandalwood as the State tree, the elephant as the State animal, the Indian roller as the State bird, and the Southern Birdwing butterfly as the State butterfly.

He said the State wanted to reclaim Rs 50,000 crore worth of forest land from HMT Limited and the IAF and private companies. —*PTI*

—WIKIPEDIA

IMPACTS HINDUS AND MUSLIMS

Sacrifice of bovines illegal: Delhi ahead of Eid

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Sacrifice of bovine species, cows, calves, camels, and other prohibited animals is completely illegal in the city and will attract a criminal case, Delhi Development Minister Kapil Mishra said in a post on X on Friday, days ahead of Eid on 28 May. West Bengal had issued similar guidelines earlier.

Mishra warned that any person found carrying out an illegal sacrifice would face criminal action. He further said sacrifice in open public places is strictly banned.

Illegal buying and selling of animals in in unauthorised locations, including markets, roads and streets will also not be permitted, he added. People were asked not to dump blood or animal waste into drains, sewers, gutters or on roads after sacrifice.

The government urged the people to report violations to the police or the Delhi government's Development Department.

Mishra extended Eid-ul-Azha greetings to the people and appealed to them to celebrate the festival peacefully, within the rules.

—MAGNIFIC

BENGAL TENSE

Muslim clerics in West Bengal have also advised their community members not to slaughter cows following the new BJP government's restrictions on cattle sales. The move came after the Calcutta High Court's upheld a ban on the slaughter of any cattle or buffalo without mandatory fitness certificates. Traders said the restrictions could impact the Hindu Goala community, which runs backyard dairies, selling milk, paneer and non-milch cattle. —*PTI*

Pupils should say Jai Sri Ram instead of Yes Sir: BJP MLA

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

BJP MLA G Janardhan Reddy allegedly endorsed statement by former party leader and MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal, calling on students to respond with 'Jai Sri Ram' instead of 'Yes Sir' when teachers call their names during attendance. "Though he has nothing to do with our party now, Yatnal has said a big thing... I extend one hundred per cent support to this call," Reddy said in a social media post. Speaking to reporters in Koppal recently, he said, "Whenever I go to any school or college, I will also give a similar call.... let the students go wearing saffron shawls and saffron turbans; we are Bharateeyas, it is a matter of Hind utva, our country, our San atana Dharma." This comes amid government order to ban on hijabs in educational institutions. *—PTI*

TN fumes over DKS' Mekedatu remarks

DKS says TN has 'no right to object,' to which AIADMK says dam will make TN a desert

CHENNAI, 22 MAY

Tamil Nadu leaders on Friday slammed Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's recent comments on the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir project.

Shivakumar, who also holds the Irrigation portfolio, claimed on Thursday that "the Supreme Court has ruled that Tamil Nadu has no right to object to the Mekedatu project and that the Central Water Commission must take a decision on it."

However, former Tamil Nadu chief minister and AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami noted that the Cauvery river water is a lifeline for farmers on the Cauvery Delta districts in Tamil Nadu, and also the drinking water source for people in 20 districts. Separately, PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss noted that the dam could impact 5 crore people.

"The Karnataka Congress government is acting in a way that undermines Tamil Nadu's rights over the Cauvery, and the Tamil Nadu government is standing by idly," he said in a statement. "If a dam is built across the Cauvery river at Mekedatu, the Delta districts will turn into a desert."

"Where does the Karnataka Congress government get the authority to talk about all the way up to the ground-breaking ceremony for Mekedatu," he asked.

Shivakumar, who has long sought to build the dam near the Ramanagara, Chamarajanagar districts near Kanakapura, has repeatedly asserted that the dam was essential for Bengaluru's drinking water needs and would not adversely impact Tamil Nadu. On Thursday, he said that the Detailed Project Report was (DPR) ready, a "bhoomi pooja" will be taken after the Centre's nod, and steps are being taken to identify land alternative forest land for compensation, as hundreds of hectares will be submerged.

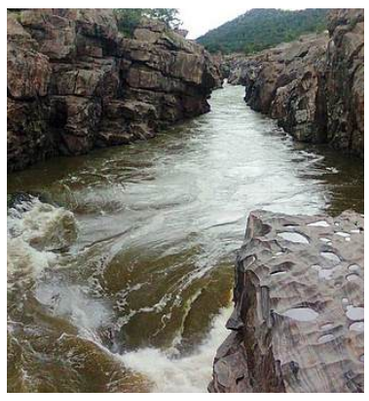
However, Tamil Nadu has opposed the project from its inception, Palaniswami noted, demanding that the new Tamil Nadu government under TVK's Vijay takes a firm stance on the issue.

Similarly, AMMK chief TTV Dhinakaran described Shivakumar's comments as "arrogant". He noted that the Supreme Court ruled that constructing a dam across the Cauvery requires the consent of the affected states. However, despite repeated directions from the Cauvery Management Authority to ensure that Tamil Nadu receives share of water, the Karnataka government is acting unilaterally. He too demanded that TVK takes a firm stance.

On the other hand, Ramadoss on Friday urged the Centre not to accept the DPR.

"The Tamil Nadu government should press the centre to revoke permission that allowed preparation of the draft project report," he said.

"It is a lie for Shivakumar to claim that the SC has ruled that Tamil Nadu has no right to oppose the Mekedatu dam," he said. *—PTI*



AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami hit back at Deputy CM and Irrigation Minister DK Shivakumar, saying Congress government is undermining Tamil Nadu's rights—*PTI*

State wants to add groundwater to curriculum

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Minor Irrigation, Science and Technology Minister NS Boseraju on Friday said the State has written to the Centre seeking ta comprehensive "groundwater" chapter in National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks under the upcoming curriculum revisions aligned with the National Education Policy 2020.

"Nearly 97 per cent of the liquid freshwater available on Earth exists as groundwater. Around 50 per cent of domestic water usage and nearly 25 per cent of agricultural needs in India rely directly on groundwater sources," Boseraju said.

He warned that climate change, declining surface water availability, and increasing water consumption are intensifying pressure on groundwater reserves and argued that groundwater awareness must begin at the school level *—PTI*

Himachal studying 'Bengaluru model' of development

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Himachal Pradesh's Public Works and Urban Development Minister Vikramaditya Singh held meetings with State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar in the City. To study Karnataka's urban development framework for adaptation in Himachal Pradesh. Discussions centred on urban infrastructure through technology, smart mobility, and sustainable civic planning suited to hill conditions. A detailed technical meeting with Shivakumar focused on IT in governance, traffic decongestion, infrastructure financing, and integrated public services. Singh stated, "We are studying Bengaluru closely to adapt successful components to Himachal," aiming for environmentally sustainable towns. *—ANI*

Senior doctor dies by suicide in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 22 MAY

A senior doctor suffering from cancer tragically died by suicide in Belagavi's Tilakwadi area. The deceased, Dr. Dinesh Laxman Bhatkal, 79, was from Ankola in Uttara Kannada district. He served in the medical field for decades before settling in Belagavi, earning respect for his simple and friendly nature. He was associated with a reputed hospital in the city. Reports state Dr. Bhatkal shot himself in the balcony of his residence. Family members and neighbours rushed to the scene after hearing the gunshot but found him already dead. Police suspect prolonged illness and depression contributed to his decision, with officials saying the exact cause will be clear after investigation. Police officials and forensic teams inspected the site. *—Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Flights from B'luru to Bidar, Kalaburagi to resume: Minister

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Karnataka Infrastructure Development Minister MB Patil on Friday announced that flight services from Bengaluru to Bidar and Kalaburagi will resume from 1 June and 10 June, respectively. Patil said flight services to Kalaburagi had earlier been suspended due to financial losses, while services to Bidar were being operated with special support. The government is funding Rs 28.47 crore to support the operations. Booking for both routes has already commenced, he added. The minister said the government is committed to enhancing air connectivity to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities across the State to accelerate economic growth but also contribute to infrastructure development. *—PTI*

Political slugfest after Cabinet drops dargah riots case

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Congress and BJP traded barbs on Friday after the Cabinet's decision to withdraw cases against Muslims allegedly involved in a riots case related to Ladle Mashak Dargah case a day earlier.

The case pertains to communal riots at Aland's Ladle Mashak Dargah in Kalaburagi district in 2022 when BJP workers sought to perform a purification ritual of Shivalinga inside the Dargah, alleging it was desecrated.

This led to communal violence during BJP's tenure. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said, "Those cases were filed against them (Muslims) politically. We have withdrawn cases against farmers, Kannada activists. and all those who carried out protests." .

Similarly, Home Minister G Parameshwara said the move was based on the recommendations of a Cabinet sub-committee that reviewed each case in detail.

However, BJP State president B Y Vijayendra alleged that the government had crossed all limits of appeasement and was "shamelessly displaying vote-bank politics".

"This Tughlaq-style Congress government has crossed every limit of civility," Vijayendra said on X, alleging the riots involved desecration of a Shivalinga. BJP MLA and former minister V Sunil Kumar also attacked the government, saying withdrawal of cases in the Ladle Mashak issue could not be equated with withdrawal of cases against farmers or Kannada activists. He alleged Congress had taken a soft stance towards SDPI and Muslim "goons". *—PTI*

No permission for Cockroach Party town hall meet: Police

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

The Bengaluru police on Friday cautioned the public against participating in or circulating social media messages related to a proposed "peaceful human chain" programme allegedly called by "Cockroach Janata Party Karnataka" near Town Hall on Sunday, saying no permission had been granted.

Police clarified that no application had been submitted by any individual, organisation or political party seeking permission to hold the programme and that no approval had been granted either by the police or by the GBA authorities for use of the venue.

According to the police statement, protests, sit-in demonstrations and rallies are not permitted at locations other than Freedom Park in accordance with the Karnataka High Court's 1 August 2022 order. The police said any gathering in front of Town Hall in violation of the order would amount to a breach of the court's directions. *—PTI*

7 held as assault on Bidar doctor triggers uproar

BIDAR, 22 MAY

The police on Friday arrested seven youth for allegedly assaulting a doctor over what they called a trivial issue at the Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BRIMS) in the city.

According to police, Dr Tukaram Bhalke was attending patients when some youth reached there to treat a patient Vijay Singh for the fatal injuries he had suffered.

The mob wanted the doctor to treat him without registering his name.

When the doctor insisted on recording his name in the Out Patient Department (OPD) register to treat them as a Medico-Legal Case (MLC), the youth, who were about a dozen in number, assaulted him.

The other staff came to Bhalke's rescue and tried to persuade the gang but they kept attacking him.

Following the incident, the angry doctors went on a strike condemning the incident, and-

Dr Tukaram Bhalke was attending patients when some youth reached there to get the doctre to treat a patient for the fatal injuries without registering his name —*SALAR*

seeking the arrest of the accused.

Bhalke has also lodged a complaint at New Town Police Station in Bidar.

The arrested accused have been identified as Aditya Krishnaji Gummal (21) of Tajlapur village in Bidar taluk, Vinod Basavaraj Koli (26) of Chambol village, Govind Keshavrao Chavan (28) of Benakanalli, Mahadev Chatrabhuja Chavan (23), Anil Dilip Kachave (25) of Ahmadpur in Maharashtra's Latur district, along with Balaji of Tajlapur and Pawan of Chambol village.

Police have intensified search to trace Balaji of Tajlapur, Pawan of Chambol, and others involved in the incident. *—Salar News*

RAIN HAVOC

Tree falls on a car in Bengaluru's Ullal after heavy overnight rains flooded many parts of the City —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Cong MLAs heading to Delhi for Cabinet reshuffle

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Congress MLA Belur Gopal Krishna on Friday said 30-35 of his party's legislators would travel to Delhi by 28 or 29 May to pressure the party High Command for a Cabinet reshuffle and induction of new ministers.

Speaking in Shivamogga, Krishna said the MLAs wanted at least 20 fresh faces in the ministry, arguing that current ministers had already enjoyed power for three years since the Congress government came to office in 2023.

He claimed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had indicated there would be a reshuffle involving 15 new ministers, but the legislators were demanding wider changes within 15 days.

Krishna warned that the MLAs could take "strong decisions" if the reshuffle was delayed further. He said the move was necessary to strengthen the Congress in Karnataka.

Karnataka currently has three vacant Cabinet berths following the resignation of B Nagendra, dismissal of K N Rajanna and death of Minister D Sudhakar. *—PTI*

- Belur Gopal Krishna said the MLAs wanted at least 20 fresh faces in the ministry. He claimed CM Siddaramaiah brought up the reshuffle.

Retd employee duped of Rs 8.9L

BELAGAVI, 22 MAY

A retired employee from Hindwadi in Belagavi lost Rs 8.29 lakh to online fraudsters posing as Bank of India card officials. Laxman lodged a complaint at the City CEN Police Station.

Police said the victim received a call on 27 April from an unknown number claiming a new debit card would be delivered to his home. The caller sent a WhatsApp link to complete a verification process.

Believing the caller, Laxman clicked the link and entered his debit card details. Soon after, money was withdrawn from his accounts.

The next day, he received another call informing him that Rs 7 lakh had been debited. Realising he had been cheated, he contacted the bank to freeze his account, but by then fraudsters had siphoned off Rs 8.29 lakh. Police registered a case and began investigation. *—Salar News*

ON ECO-SENSTIVE ZONE

'Anekal stadium is a real estate land grab'

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

A day before Chief Minister Siddaramaiah lays the foundation stone for an international stadium in Anekal, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council **Chalavadi Narayanaswamy** on Friday flagged major ecological concerns over the project.

He said in a statement on X the 80,000 seat stadium being built at an estimated cost of Rs 900 crore was on an ecologically sensitive zone.

"Giving permission for such huge concrete works in the Eco-Sensitive Zone, which is the lifeline of Bengaluru city, is an atrocity on nature," he stated.

Alleging that the Karnataka Housing Board (KHB) had acquired the land to build houses, he said "It is a strict law that the land acquired in the name of the intended housing construction cannot be used for any other purpose for any reason". He accused the government of duping farmers into providing their land, accusing the Congress of "capitalising on farmers who were unaware of the law".

"It is highly condemnable that housing projects that were supposed to provide shelter to the poor are being thrown into the wind and real estate scams are being spread in the name of a stadium," he added.

He demanded that the State government immediately halted the project and gave the land back to the farmers.

Earlier, bodies such as the Karnataka Rashtra Samithi (KRS) had noted that the project would severely impact the Bannerghatta National Park and nearby areas.

—Salar News

- Chalavadi Narayanaswamy said in a statement on X the 80,000 seat stadium being built at an estimated cost of Rs 900 crore was on an ecologically sensitive zone.

30 ATTACK MAN FOR COMPLAINING ON WAQF IRREGULARITIES IN RAICHUR

RAICHUR, 22 MAY

Around 30 men allegedly attacked a complainant and his associates with knives, iron rods, and stones near the Tahsildar office in Raichur over a Lokayukta complaint regarding alleged misuse of Waqf Board funds.

A resident identified as Sanavulla had lodged a complaint with the Lokayukta alleging large-scale misappropriation of funds in the execution of the works.

Soon after the inquiry, the group—reportedly enraged over the investigation—allegedly called Sanavulla to the Tahsildar office premises in Raichur on the pretext of holding a compromise discussion.

During the talks, nearly 30 men allegedly attacked Sanavulla and his friends on the roadside.

Sanavulla sustained severe injuries all over his body and reportedly required 24 stitches. He is currently undergoing treatment.

According to reports, grants worth Rs 26 lakh were released during 2017–19 by the Minority Welfare Hub and the Waqf Board for the development of a mosque, graveyard, and Eidgah ground in Talmari village of Raichur taluk.

An FIR has been registered at the Sadar Bazar Police Station against more than 15 people, including Ashu Patel, Nizam Patel, and Irfan. The accused group has also reportedly filed a counter-complaint against Sanavulla and his associates. *—Salar News*

- Nearly 30 men allegedly attacked Sanavulla and his friends on the roadside. Sanavulla sustained severe injuries.

Delhi HC issues contempt notice to AAP man, journo

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Delhi High Court has issued notices to AAP leader Gopal Rai and a journalist in a criminal contempt case. The court alleged they, along with other AAP leaders, coordinated a social media campaign against Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, a sitting High Court judge. Justice Navin Chawla and Justice Ravinder Dudeja made the order while hearing advocate Ashok Chaitanya's petition, with consent from Delhi Government's Additional Standing Counsel Sanjeev Bhandari. The court appointed Senior Advocate Rajdipa Behura as amicus curiae, stating no need for another appointment. The matter is listed for further hearing on 4 August 2026. The petition claims a campaign on 'X' targeted Justice Sharma during a CBI case. —*ANI*

— PTI

Radhakrishnan elected Kerala Assembly Speaker

T'PURAM, 22 MAY

Senior Congress leader Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan was elected as the 16th Kerala Legislative Assembly Speaker, securing 101 votes. Pro Tem Speaker G Sudhakaran did not vote, ending his role. CPI(M) candidate AC Moideen received 35 votes, BJP's BB Gopakumar 3 votes, with the LDF holding 35 seats and the BJP three in the 140-member house. Sudhakaran praised Radhakrishnan's experience, saying, "He is a veteran leader, simple and accessible." Radhakrishnan, from Thiruvanchoor in Kottayam, has held 17 ministerial posts and been an MLA since 1991, representing Adoor and Kottayam. The Opposition expressed support, hoping he will act as a democratic guardian. —*PTI*

Kerala BJP MLA opens 24/7 office, ambulance service

T'PURAM, 22 MAY

Newly elected BJP MLA Rajeev Chandrasekhar announced a 24-hour MLA office with ambulance service in Nemom. The facility will begin in early June, aiming to provide assistance during emergencies. Chandrasekhar, also BJP Kerala State President, said the office would be accessible day and night, with direct contact via phone and email. The initiative includes ward-level public meetings every two months with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and councillors. His priorities include addressing water shortages, waste management, and waterlogging. Chandrasekhar warned against discrimination against BJP constituencies and affirmed his commitment to bringing meaningful change, saying, "People elected me to bring about change."—*PTI*

Bengal jhalmuri vendor who served PM getting threats

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The jhalmuri vendor from West Bengal's Jhargram, who recently caught attention after serving jhalmuri to Prime Minister Modi, said that he is receiving threatening calls from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Vikram Sao said that unknown callers have been repeatedly threatening him over the phone following his interaction with the Prime Minister during Modi's recent visit to West Bengal. He said that threatening calls have been coming daily from international numbers. He claimed that some callers made frightening gestures during video calls and brandished weapons while threatening him. Sao said he has informed the police about the threats and that some policemen have now been assigned for his security. —*AGENCIES*

No stay on WB's cow slaughter ban: HC

Calcutta High Court bans openly killing bovines in public places ahead of Eid-al-Adha

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

The Calcutta High Court refused to stay the West Bengal government's order reiterating a complete ban on the slaughter of any cattle or buffalo without the mandatory fitness certificate ahead of Id-Uz-Zuha.

Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi said on Thursday that the slaughter of animals, including cows and buffalos, in any open public place is strictly prohibited, and the sacrifice of a cow is no part of the festival of Id-Uz-Zuha and is not a religious requirement under Islam, as held by the Supreme Court.

"In our opinion, the 1950 Act takes care of the relief prayed for by the petitioner, and we have no doubt that the State will implement the Act in its true spirit," the court said, referring to the West Bengal Animal Slaughter Control Act, 1950.

Earlier, on 13 May, the WB government said that the fitness certificate will be issued only by the Chairperson of any Municipality or the President of any Panchayat Samiti, along with a Government Veterinary Officer after both of them agree in writing that the animal is over 14 years of age, rendering it unfit for work or breeding. —*ANI*

'WB COPS TORTURED ME TO CONFESS TO RATH KILLING'

BALLIA, 22 MAY

Raj Singh, who was arrested in connection with the murder of West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari's personal assistant Chandranath Rath, alleged that he was wrongly arrested, mistaken for another person with the same name and later released after a CBI probe found no connection between him and the case.

Speaking to ANI, Raj said he was picked up by the WB police while returning from Ayodhya with his mother. He alleged that he was forced to confess to a crime he did not commit.

He claimed that he was later taken to Kolkata, where he was allegedly subjected to custodial pressure.

CBI sources said Raj Singh's release came after it filed a report before the court stating that he had no role in the murder. Earlier, the CBI arrested Vinay Rai, the fifth accused in the case, from Varanasi. Another accused, Rajkumar, was arrested in Muzaffarnagar and is believed to be the main shooter. Meanwhile, in Balia, a court rejected a CBI plea seeking custody of firearms recovered from a man arrested in connection with the killing of Rath. —*PTI*

WB govt alters gag order on its employees

The West Bengal government altered a media gag order on Thursday which had imposed sweeping restrictions on public employees, due to a severe backlash. The original diktat issued via Circular No. 139-CS/2026 on Tuesday by chief secretary Manoj Agarwal imposed a blanket, multi-clause "complete prohibition" on virtually anyone drawing a taxpayer-funded cheque from criticising the establishment. As public outrage flooded social media and the Opposition went on the offensive against the attempt to stifle free speech, Nabanna scrambled to issue a corrective document on Thursday. Signed by additional chief secretary Rajesh Pandey, the new order limited the scope of the restriction to "ONLY" regular establishments under direct administrative control. Sources said a senior BJP leader intervened to ensure the alteration of the order as public resentment increased against the West Bengal BJP government — Agencies

'STOP EVICTION'

West Bengal Railway Hawkers' Union (CITU) protests the forcible eviction of hawkers by the WB admin in Kolkata on Friday —*PTI*

TMC alleges leader of opposition not allotted room in Bengal Assembly

The TMC said on Friday that the Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly has not been allotted a room in the House, and raised questions over the functioning of the democratic institution. In a post on X, the party said its legislators continue to sit in the Assembly lobby. "The assembly is the temple of democracy. Yet, even today, the Leader of the Opposition has not been allotted a room. Trinamool Congress MLAs continue to sit in the Assembly lobby as questions grow over the functioning of democratic institutions," the party said. The TMC nominated its Ballygunge MLA Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay, as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Assembly. —*PTI*

Assam Guv outlines BJP govt's plans

GUWAHATI, 22 MAY

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya outlined the new government's vision for the state for the next five years in his first address in the 16th state Assembly amidst an opposition walkout, alleging failure of the dispensation to address core issues.

Barely five minutes into the governor's speech on Friday, Congress and Raijor Dal MLAs demanded that the government address core issues like inflation instead of dwelling on achievements.

The Congress legislators also displayed placards and raised slogans before staging a walkout. The two Raijor Dal MLAs, led by their leader Akhil Gogoi, remained in the House initially and continued to speak as the governor delivered his speech.

After about 30 minutes, the two Raijor Dal MLAs also walked out, after submitting a paper with the points raised by them. The governor, said the return of the BJP-led NDA government for a third successive time was a testimony to people's support for the vision of the ruling dispensation, which secured an unprecedented 102 out of 126 seats.

Mentioning of peace accords and settlement agreements signed with different insurgent outfits over the last few years, he appealed to the ULFA(I), the only major group outside the peace process, to join the mainstream.

Acharya welcomed the government's decision to introduce the the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), maintaining that it will strengthen equality and usher in a progressive society. —*PTI*

DMK's sarcastic jibe draws VCK retort

CHENNAI, 22 MAY

- The DMK said the VCK is just a 'coconut tree bending towards a neighbour'

The DMK on Friday made a sarcastic "coconut tree bending towards a neighbour" remark against the VCK and IUML after they joined the TVK government, prompting the VCK to retort that it "did not grow due to the mercy of other parties."

Aiming to assuage their feelings, DMK chief MK Stalin appealed to DMK workers not to use harsh words hurting anyone.

Both Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi and IUML, allies of the DMK till the 2026 Assembly election, supported the TVK government which fell short of a majority in the Assembly.

VCK leader Vanni Arasu, who emerged victorious from Tindivanam and AM Shahjahan who was elected from Papanasam were sworn in as ministers by Governor Rajendra Viswanath Arlekar at the Lok Bhavan here today in the presence of Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay.

Shahjahan was made Minister for Minorities Welfare while Vanni Arasu was made Minister for Social Justice.

DMK deputy general secretary A Raja, with a penchant for making controversial remarks, alluded the two parties joining the TVK Cabinet as a "coconut tree bending towards a neighbour."

"What name should be given to those attempting to help others like a coconut tree that bends and offers coconuts to the neighbour" Raja said on 'X'. Both VCK and IUML had earlier clarified that they supported the TVK government to prevent President's rule, and that DMK chief MK Stalin was aware of their "independent" decision. Besides them, the Left and the Congress too supported TVK. —*PTI*

The induction of the 2 MLAs into the Cabinet brings the total number of ministers, including the CM to 35 —*PTI*

SHAHJAHAN, VANNI ARASU SWORN IN

CHENNAI, 22 MAY

IUML's AM Shahjahan and VCK's Vanni Arasu were sworn in as ministers by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Friday at the Lok Bhavan here.With two Congress members sworn-in as ministers in the formed Vijay-led TVK government, the number of allies in the present ruling dispensation goes up to four, signifying coalition rule completely changing the alliance dynamics in Tamil Nadu.

The induction of the 2 MLAs in the Cabinet led by Vijay brings the total number of ministers, including the CM to 35, the maximum permissible limit under the Constitution. — *PTI*

'Remove converted tribals from ST list'

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Religious conversion is a major threat to the country and has deeply affected tribal regions, leading to "serious social conflicts and divisions," Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram president Satyendra Singh has said.

Singh added that the solution to "many problems related to conversion" lies in amending Article 342 of the Constitution to deny benefits under the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category to those who convert from Hinduism to Christianity or Islam.

According to Singh, a joint committee formed by the government in 1969 had proposed that those who had converted to Christianity or Islam should no longer receive ST reservation benefits. Singh said the Ashram, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-affiliate, set up the Janjati Suraksha Manch in Raipur in 2006 to further pursue the issue.

Singh added that former Congress Member of Parliament (MP) Kartik Oraon had raised concerns in Parliament over converted tribals continuing to receive ST reservation benefits.

Singh also claimed that religious conversion of the tribal community leads to "alienation." He acknowledged that social discrimination and caste divisions within the Hindu society have contributed to religious conversions.

Satyendra Singh —*PTI*

- He said a panel had in 1969 said that those who had converted to Christianity or Islam should no longer get ST reservation

According to Singh, religious conversions took place most significantly in the northeast, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala. — *PTI*

'Cockroach Janata Party' wants Pradhan to quit

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Back with the tagline "Cockroaches Never Die" after its original X handle was blocked in India, the "Cockroach Janata Party" (CJP), a satirical social-media account, launched a campaign on Friday demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

The campaign, spearheaded through CJP's new X handle, "Cockroach Is Back," and its Instagram platform, centres on the systemic failures in the education sector, particularly concerns surrounding the NEET-UG 2026 "paper-leak" controversy.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke urged followers to support an online petition demanding Pradhan's resignation.

"How are you cockroaches? Today, we are starting a petition demanding the resignation of the education minister," Dipke said in a video message.

Calling for accountability, he said failures in the education system have adversely affected students. — *PTI*

MEETING ON 26 MAY

W Asia to top Quad agenda

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The foreign ministers of Quad nations will deliberate on the West Asia crisis and the situation in the Indo-Pacific at an India-hosted meeting on Tuesday.

The New Delhi meeting will be attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will preside over the meeting.

Rubio, Wong and Motegi are also expected to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, besides holding separate bilateral meetings with Jaishankar.

"In keeping with the Quad vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, the ministers will build on discussions held in Washington DC on July 1, 2025," the MEA said.

"They will exchange views on advancing Quad cooperation across priority areas, review progress on ongoing Quad initiatives, and reflect on recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region and other international issues of mutual concern," it said.

The Quad, comprising India, the US, Australia and Japan, has emerged as a key grouping largely focusing on peace, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. — *PTI*

Japanese FM Motegi, Indian EAM Dr S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Rubio and Australian FM Penny Wong at the 2015 Quad meeting—*PTI*

India and Cyprus upgrade bilateral ties to strategic partnership

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

India and Cyprus elevated their ties to a strategic partnership and set up a joint task force to facilitate deeper cooperation in sectors like infrastructure and shipping as Prime Minister Modi hosted Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides.

The two leaders also discussed the West Asia crisis as well as the Ukraine conflict on Friday, with Modi saying that New Delhi supports all efforts for an early end to the hostilities.

"Over the past decade, investment from Cyprus to India has nearly doubled. Trust between the two countries has increased, and with the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement, numerous new possibilities have emerged," Modi said in his media statement.

Taking advantage of this, we are aiming to double this investment again in the next five years, he said.

"And to realise this resolve, today we are elevating our trusted relationship to a strategic partnership," he added. — *PTI*

Prime Minister Modi and Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides take a selfie before their meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi—*PTI*

— PTI

Come for talks; don't call bandhs, says Manipur CM

IMPHAL, 22 MAY

Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Friday appealed to the people of the state to come forward for talks and not to resort to bandhs or blockades. Singh was speaking at the inauguration of a bridge at Akham Makha Leikai in Imphal West district. Addressing a gathering, Singh said, "Enforcing bandhs and blockades out of anger toward the government only leads to hardship, particularly for the daily wage earners." He also said, "The day after I returned from Jiribam, a bomb attack at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district killed two small children in April causing much grief to all of us. The incident caused disruptions to the economy of the state due to shutdowns and bandhs."—*PTI*

Rapido driver held for obscene act in Gurugram

GURUGRAM, 22 MAY

A Rapido cab driver has been detained after allegedly masturbating in front of a woman passenger in a moving vehicle, police said on Friday. The driver, Vijay Kumar, 23, a resident of Banihari village in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj district, is being questioned. The cab has been seized, and he will be produced before a court on Saturday. The complainant, working as a software engineer, booked the cab at 8.15am on Thursday. She recorded a video of the incident, asked the driver to stop, and then got out, after which he fled. Police traced and arrested him within two hours, using surveillance and booking details. Further investigation is ongoing.—*PTI*

— ANI

Four women killed in tiger attack in M'rashtra

CHANDRAPUR, 22 MAY

A tiger killed four women gathering tendu leaves in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district on Friday morning, forest officials reported. The incident occurred near Gunjewahi village in Sindewahi tehsil, about 70 km from the district headquarters. The women, residents of Gunjewahi, had gone into the forest to collect tendu leaves used as wrappers for bidis. The tiger attacked and killed all four women—Kawadabai Mohurle, 45, Anitabai Mohurle, 40, Sunita Mohurle, 38, and Sangita Chaudhary, 50. Officials stated it was unclear whether the killings happened simultaneously or at different spots. Forest officials responded, and further details are awaited after the 'panchnama'. —*PTI*

Lucknow doctor accused of raping sedated patient

LUCKNOW, 22 MAY

A doctor at a private hospital in Lucknow was accused of raping a female student after injecting her with a sedative injection during treatment, police said on Friday. The student had been admitted to a private hospital on 18 May after suffering some health issues, officials said.

"According to the complaint, the doctor allegedly called the patient alone into the operation theatre during treatment and asked the female staff and the victim's father to step outside," Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Twinkle Jain told reporters. The doctor was detained for questioning, and the alleged victim sent for medical examination. A case has been registered, the officer said.—*PTI*

M'rashtra panic buys fuel; govt rules out shortage

It comes after a single day surge in diesel, petrol sales

MUMBAI, 22 MAY

Amid a spike in fuel sales across Maharashtra, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chagan Bhujbal on Friday assured that the state faces no petrol or diesel shortage, appealing to the public to stop panic-buying and dismissing all rumours about a looming shortage.

The minister's remarks came after the state witnessed a massive single-day surge in fuel sales, with diesel sales skyrocketing by 42 per cent and petrol by 21 per cent over average daily figures across several districts amid concerns over fuel supplies following disruptions linked to the West Asia crisis.

Talking to reporters here, Bhujbal said both the Centre and the state government were fully capable of ensuring an uninterrupted supply of fuel, and there was no need for citizens to hoard.

Diesel sales skyrocketed by 42 per cent and petrol by 21 per cent across several districts amid concerns over fuel supplies —*AI*

"There is no fuel shortage in Maharashtra. People should not panic and store extra petrol or diesel," he said, stressing that adequate fuel stocks were available across the state.

According to the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department, petrol sales in the first fortnight of May rose by 20.39 per cent, while diesel sales increased by 19.66 per cent compared to normal levels.

The department pointed out that on 19 May alone, diesel sales surged by 42 per cent and petrol sales by 21 per cent over average daily sales. It said all demands were met. —*PTI*

Odisha govt makes EV a must-use for official works

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

The Odisha government has issued an eight-point directive mandating virtual official meetings wherever possible, compulsory use of electric vehicles (EVs), and a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption across departments.

The directives were issued on Thursday on the instructions of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who had earlier reduced the size of his official convoy following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to spend wisely.

The CM also directed the chief secretary to take steps to ensure at least a 10 per cent reduction in fuel use. —*PTI*

Pune lecturer nabbed in NEET paper leak

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

The CBI has arrested a Pune-based lecturer for allegedly leaking the physics paper of NEET UG 2026 to a select group of aspirants, officials said on Friday.

The CBI has arrested Manisha Sanjay Havaldar, presently employed with the Seth Hiralal Saraf Prashala in Pune, terming her another "source" for the paper leak.

"The CBI has identified another key accused who was the source for the leak of NEET-UG 2026 physics questions," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

The agency alleged that Havaldar was involved in the NEET UG process after being appointed an expert by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

"She had complete access to the physics question paper. In April, she shared some of the questions with co-accused Manisha Mandhare," the statement said.

The CBI arrested Mandhare, a botany teacher from Pune, in connection with the NEET paper leak on 16 May.

The agency found that the questions Havaldar shared with the aspirants tallied with the physics paper of NEET UG 2026."The CBI conducted searches at various locations across the country and seized several incriminating documents, laptops, bank statements and mobile phones. A detailed analysis of the seized items is underway," the agency said.

"So far, 11 accused have been arrested in this case from Delhi, Jaipur, Gurugram, Nasik, Pune, Latur and Ahliyanagar," the CBI spokesperson said.

The investigation so far has brought out the actual source of the paper leak, the agency said.

"The middlemen, involved in mobilising students have been identified and arrested," the spokesperson said. —*PTI*

Umar Khalid gets 3-day interim bail in UAPA case

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Friday granted three-day interim bail to activist Umar Khalid, who is in custody in a case under anti-terror law UAPA concerning the "larger conspiracy" behind the February 2020 riots in the city's northeastern parts.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Madhu Jain permitted Khalid to be released from 1 June to 3 June to enable him to meet his mother who has to undergo a surgery.

The bench noted that the Supreme Court rejected Khalid's regular bail plea on 5 January but granted him the reprieve by taking an "empathetic view."

ASG S V Raju, appearing for Delhi Police, argued that Khalid's mother has to undergo a minor surgey and he should be permitted to visit her with a police escort.

The court was hearing Khalid's appeal against the trial court's May 19 order that dismissed his interim bail plea.

He had urged the trial court to grant him 15 days' interim bail to attend a 40-day post-death ritual of his uncle and take care of his mother, who has to undergo a surgery.

Delhi High Court granted three-day interim bail to activist Umar Khalid in a case under anti-terror law UAPA concerning the "larger conspiracy" behind 2020 riots in north-east Delhi —*PTI*

Khalid was booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for being one of the "masterminds" of the February 2020 riots that had left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured. The violence had erupted during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). —*PTI*

SC to hear plea on compulsory 3-language policy

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday said it will hear next week a plea challenging the new policy of CBSE which has made study of three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, compulsory for Class 9 students beginning 1 July.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi mentioned the matter before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi.

"This is an urgent PIL.The petitioners are students, teachers and parents. They are challenging the new policy of the CBSE by which in the 9th standard, two more languages have been made compulsory," Rohatgi said. He urged the top court to list the matter for hearing on Monday.

The Chief Justice of India said next week will be a miscellaneous week and the matter would be listed. —*PTI*

Muslims pray at home with black bands to protest Bhojshala ruling

Heavy security force deployed at the Bhojshala complex as people offer prayers following the Madhya Pradesh High Court verdict declaring the site a Hindu temple —*PTI*

DHAR, 22 MAY

Members of the Muslim community in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district said they would offer their first Friday namaz at home and wear black bands after the setback in court in the Bhojshala case.

A week ago, the Madhya Pradesh High Court struck down a 2003 Archaeological Survey of India order that allowed Muslims to pray at the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex on Fridays, holding that it was a Hindu temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati.

Before the verdict, Hindus were allowed to worship at the medieval monument on Tuesdays, while Muslims had been conducting Friday prayers there for years.

Markets and business establishments run by Muslims will also remain closed in Dhar on Friday, said community members.

Meanwhile, officials said around 1,500 police personnel, backed by drones and CCTV surveillance, have been deployed in and around the Bhojshala complex ahead of the first Friday after the high court verdict.

The Bhoj Utsav Samiti has called upon Hindus to gather for an "akhand puja" and "maha aarti" at the 11th-century structure on Friday.

Dhar SP Sachin Sharma said that a nine-layer security arrangement, including vehicle checks, CCTV, etc. has been put in place. — *PTI*

People walk past debris following a landslide in the Ramnagar area in Shimla —*PTI*

NHAI won't pay for 'act of God' Shimla landslide

- NHAI said the incident that occurred on 25 May when a retaining wall constructed by its agency was damaged aused solely due to natural calamity

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has told the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that it is not liable to pay compensation to owners of agricultural land as the May 2025 landslide that occurred in Shimla was an 'Act of God.'

The NHAI submitted its reply against the plea filed in January, claiming that the heavy construction work being undertaken by the authority and its concessionaire, without properly strengthening a slope, had damaged agricultural land in Shimla rural tehsil, causing landslides.

The plea was filed by some land owners against the NHAI and its agencies involved in widening a road for a four-lane project in Shakral village to Dhalli (Kaithlighat-Dhalli Section of NH-5).

In response to the plea, the NGT had sought replies from the authorities.

In its reply or counter-affidavit dated 18 May, the NHAI said that the applicants highlighted an incident that occurred on 25 May when a retaining wall constructed by its agency was damaged.

"The incident was caused solely due to natural calamity (Act of God/Vis Major). Heavy rainfall occurred in Himachal Pradesh from late May 2025 onwards, triggering widespread and large-scale landslides, including in areas where no construction or project of any nature was being undertaken," the reply said.

It said that the incident, being an Act of God, was supported by the IMD report and the state government's disaster declaration dated 1 September, 2025.

On the alleged damage to 440 trees in a plot, a loss of over Rs 32.3 lakh claimed, the NHAI urged the SDM Shimla (Rural) to ask the Horticulture department to re-examine its report and submit a fresh field-based report.

The NHAI said that compensation, if any, cannot be based on the erroneous and inflated assessment of the horticulture department. —*PTI*

Dowry death: Twisha's husband surrenders

JABALPUR/BHOPAL, 22 MAY

The high-profile Twisha Sharma dowry death case saw fast-paced developments on Friday with police taking custody of her husband who was on the run for more than a week, and the Madhya Pradesh High Court ordering a second autopsy by a specialised AIIMS Delhi team as requested by her family.

The High Court also issued a notice to Twisha's mother-in-law Giribala Singh, a former district judge, over pleas for cancellation of her bail over non-cooperation with the police.

Samarth Singh, Twisha's absconding lawyer husband, withdrew his anticipatory bail application filed in the High Court earlier in the day, and appeared at the Jabalpur district court in the evening to surrender. A team of Bhopal police took him in their custody and left with him for the state capital, his lawyers said.

Samarth Singh, accused in alleged Twisha Sharma death case speaks to media after surrendering before a court in Jabalpur on Friday —*PTI*

Twisha Sharma, a 33-year-old model-turned-actor from Noida, was found hanging at her marital home in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on May 12. While her in-laws allege she suffered with drug addiction, her family maintains she was harassed for dowry leading to her death.

Hearing a petition filed by Twisha's family, a single-bench of the High Court asked the state government to make immediate arrangements for flying a specialised team of doctors from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, to Bhopal for the second autopsy, advocate Akur Pandey, the family's lawyer told PTI.

The decision comes just two days after Judicial Magistrate First Class Anudita Gupta in Bhopal rejected the family's request for a second postmortem and also suggested that the probe so far did not warrant any such action.

In a related development, the Madhya Pradesh home department issued a notification stating that it has proposed to transfer the investigation of the case to the CBI. —*PTI*

'FORCED EVICTIONS, EXTORTION'

DU women's hostel erupts in protest

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Students living in the University Hostel for Women (UHW) of the Delhi University (DU) staged an overnight sit-in over lack of water supply and "extortion" by the administration, according to a Left-backed student group.

The All India Students' Association (AISA) also alleged "forced eviction" of students.

"For over a week, these students have been pushed to the brink. While they are in the middle of semester examinations and preparing for NET exams, the administration has declared a virtual red alert, shutting down the water supply across two full blocks and stripping the reading room of basic chairs," the group said in the statement.

The students' protest started around 9.30pm on 21 May, and continued till 22 May. —*ANI*

The protest began around 9.30pm on Thursday and continued past midnight, with students sitting on the streets of the campus amid ongoing semester examinations and preparation for NEET ex-aminations.

In its statement, AISA alleged that students had been "pushed to the brink" over the past week due to administrative actions, including disruption of basic amenities. It claimed that water supply had been shut in parts of two hostel blocks and that chairs had been removed from the reading room, affecting academic preparations.AISA alleged that assurances given by the hostel provost to restore amenities and extend the residency deadline were not fulfilled.

The administration later issued a signed mandate granting an unconditional extension to residents till 30 June and a written assurance that all infrastructural demands such as reading room chairs and mess coolers, will be met forthwith, the group said. —*PTI/ANI*

HEAT KILLS FISH IN RAJASTHAN

Dead fish found in Jaipur dam amid rising temperature and low oxygen levels. Hundreds of fish have been found floating dead in multiple ponds and canals across Rajasthan, including districts like Bhilwara, Jalore, and Sri Ganganagar. Local authorities and fisheries departments point to extreme heatwaves, rapidly dropping water levels, and severely depleted dissolved oxygen in the water as the causes. Piles of dead fish were also seen on the banks of Mansagar and other reservoirs *– PTI*

Cockroach Party founder's parents lose sleep

The outfit, now popular as CJP, has garnered over 19 million followers on Instagram since it was founded barely a week ago by Boston University student Abhijeet Dipke (inset), earlier associated with the Aam Aadmi Party – *INSTAGRAM@COCKROACHJANATAPARTY, @ABHIJEETDIPKE)*

The meteoric rise of satirical digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party on social media has left the parents of its founder, Abhijeet Dipke, overwhelmed by fears that he could land in trouble or even face arrest.

The outfit, now popular as CJP, has garnered over 19 million followers on Instagram since it was founded barely a week ago by Boston University student Dipke, earlier associated with the Aam Aadmi Party.

His parents Bhagwan and Anita Dipke, who live in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, told a Marathi news channel on Thursday that they were not keen on letting their son enter politics. The parents said they have lost their sleep after learning about Abhijeet's move.

Cockroach Janata Party, according to Dipke, was born following a controversy over Chief Justice of India Surya Kant using the terms "parasites" and "cockroaches" while pulling up a lawyer for his plea seeking senior designation.

Though the CJI later clarified that he was misquoted

and his remarks were directed specifically at individuals entering the legal profession through "fake and bogus degrees", the CJP, with the insect as its symbol, took the social media by storm.

"If we look at politics nowadays, fear is natural, no matter how many followers he has. In one of his interviews, he himself expressed fear of being arrested after returning to India. We read about such incidents in newspapers," said Bhagwan Dipke.

> The meteoric rise of satirical digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party on social media has left the parents of its founder, Abhijeet Dipke, overwhelmed by fears that he could land in trouble or even face arrest.

Abhijeet's mother Anita said she would want her son to stay away from politics and instead focus on getting a job.

"We just want him to come home safely. Whether he continues in politics will be his decision, but we do not want him to pursue it. I do not know whether he will listen to us or not. I will not support him in this. I am worried about him," she said.

The mother said Abhijeet studied in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar initially and later moved to Pune for further studies. Engineering was difficult for him, so he decided to move towards mass media, she said.

Bhagwan added that Abhijeet decided to study journalism abroad because his sister was already there. The father said he wanted his son to take up a job in Pune or Delhi.

The parents said they first learned about the CJP from a neighbour. "Later, I was told by one of my grandchildren that he has more followers on social media than many prominent people in the country. Earlier, he had worked with AAP. Even then, I had told him that we were not into politics and that he should pursue a service," said Anita.

Bhagwan said the explosion of CJP on social media has made him anxious. "I'm worried because he is now famous. And such individuals get arrested. I have not slept for the past two nights worrying about what might happen to him. I hate politics and have no interest in it," he added.

Using memes, the CJP platform has quickly gained traction through sharp political satire and commentary. Much of its content centres on youth concerns such as unemployment, examination paper leaks and education, packaged through graphics, animation, manifestos and charter-style demands. *—PTI*

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

Wrong marking, glitches mar CBSE re-evaluation

> Access to scanned answer sheets under CBSE's Class 12 re-evaluation process has exposed deeper concerns surrounding the board's controversial On-Screen Marking (OSM) system, with students alleging incorrect marking, blurred scanned copies, and repeated glitches on the portal.

Access to scanned answer sheets under CBSE's Class 12 re-evaluation process has exposed deeper concerns surrounding the board's controversial On-Screen Marking (OSM) system, with students alleging incorrect marking, blurred scanned copies, and repeated glitches on the portal.

CBSE's Class 12 examination results this year have been marred by controversy over the newly introduced digital evaluation process, with several students claiming they received unexpectedly low marks.

Amid growing outrage, the board opened the process for verification of marks, access to scanned answer books and re-evaluation.

However, the re-evaluation process itself has now come under criticism, with students alleging unreadable answer sheets, unchecked responses and technical failures on the portal.

Under the OSM system introduced this year, answer sheets were scanned digitally and evaluated on-screen instead of being physically checked by examiners.

Soon after results were declared, students across subjects - particularly Physics, Mathematics, Accountancy and Economics - began alleging discrepancies in marking and unusually low scores.

The controversy intensified after students started accessing scanned copies of their evaluated answer sheets through the re-evaluation window.

Several students shared screenshots on the post on X alleging that portions of their answer sheets were blurred to the extent that the handwriting itself was difficult to decipher.

"How are evaluators checking copies if students themselves cannot read the scanned pages?" one user wrote while sharing screenshots of blurred pages from the evaluated answer book.

There has been no official response from CBSE on the issues raised by students so far.

Another student alleged that complete answers and calculations were left unchecked despite being clearly attempted in the physical copy.

In another post, a student claimed that marks awarded on individual pages did not match the final total reflected in the result. Others alleged that step marking was either ignored or inconsistently awarded in numerical subjects.

Several students also complained that the re-evaluation portal repeatedly crashed during payment and application submission.

"The portal isn't functioning properly. Payments are failing and copies are not loading," a user wrote on X, while another claimed that the website became inaccessible during peak hours.

Students also raised concerns over answers spanning multiple pages allegedly being evaluated partially under the digital system.

The criticism comes weeks after social media was flooded with complaints from students and parents questioning the implementation of the OSM system. Many students alleged that their scores were significantly lower than expected despite strong academic records and internal assessments.

Following the backlash, CBSE reduced the fee for obtaining scanned answer sheets and re-evaluation requests to Rs 100 per subject. The board also issued a clarification regarding the post-result process and said students must first apply for verification of marks, following which they can access photocopies of evaluated answer books and seek re-evaluation of specific questions.

CBSE had earlier rejected allegations of lapses in the digital evaluation process, terming claims regarding faulty scanning and improper checking as "factually incorrect". The board maintained that the scanning and evaluation process underwent multiple levels of quality checks to ensure fairness and transparency.

Despite the clarification, criticism around the OSM system has continued to intensify online, with students demanding a review of the digital evaluation mechanism and greater accountability in the assessment process. *—ANI*

CBSE's Class 12 examination results this year have been marred by controversy over the newly introduced digital evaluation process *–FREEPIK*

Hardline Iran general is major player in talks with US over war

As negotiations with the United States hang in the balance, a hard-line Iranian general linked to notorious attacks at home and abroad over the past decades is believed to have seized a place near the centre of power.

Brig Gen Ahmad Vahidi, who heads Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, has become a major player in formulating Iran's tough stance in negotiating a possible end to the war with the US, experts say. He is believed to be part of a small clique in direct contact with Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who remains in hiding after being reportedly wounded in the 28 February Israeli strikes that killed his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Like everything in Iran since the war began, who ultimately controls decision-making remains uncertain. As people within the upper ranks of Iran's theocracy vie for power, they can gain or lose favour quickly. Vahidi himself hasn't been seen publicly since 8 February, weeks before the war began. On Thursday, Iranian media carried contradictory reports on Vahidi's meeting with Pakistan's interior minister in Tehran, who carried a message regarding negotiations with the US and met with Iranian officials.

Vahidi helped shape Iran's support of militant groups across the region, and is accused of a role in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish centre in Argentina and, in 2022, led domestic security forces in a bloody crackdown on protesters.

He was elevated to Guard commander this year after his predecessor was killed. "Vahidi and his inner circle have likely consolidated control over... Iran's negotiations policy," the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said.

Iran's war strategy has been to keep a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, causing a global energy crisis. It has also struck hard against oil facilities, hotels and infrastructure in Gulf Arab nations.

In negotiations, it has held out against US demands that it surrender its stockpile of enriched uranium, betting that it can outlast the US in the standoff and that President Donald Trump will be reluctant to resume outright war that could bring greater damage to America's Gulf allies.

That likely reflects Vahidi's confrontational style. "He comes from that mindset of unending revolution, unending resistance," said Kenneth Katzman, a senior fellow at The Soufan Group, a New York-based think tank. Vahidi believes "the US needs to be challenged at every turn," said Katzman, an Iran expert who advised the US Congress for over 30 years.

Brig Gen Ahmad Vahidi led domestic security forces in a bloody crackdown on protesters in 2022 *–PTI*

A FOCAL POINT

Pakistan hosted talks in April between an Iranian delegation, led by parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and an American one, headed by US Vice President JD Vance. But it ended without a deal. Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi returned home to face criticism about "making concessions". Qalibaf had to insist publicly that the talks had the support of the supreme leader.

Since then, Vahidi has become the main point of contact for those negotiating, said a regional official with direct knowledge of the mediation. The extreme seclusion and unknown condition of the supreme leader have fueled speculation about jockeying among leaders for access to Khamenei and influence over him. In May, President Masoud Pezeshkian, who many see as sidelined by the Guard, went out of his way to say he "got to see our dear leader" and spoke to him for around two hours.

But Holly Dagres, a senior fellow at Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said it's likely the new supreme leader "is in lockstep with a more hard-line (Guard) — similar to his father, but in a more emboldened and uncompromising form."

VAHIDI FORGE THROUGH THE YEARS

Born Ahmad Shahcheraghi in Iran's southern city of Shiraz in 1958, Vahidi, like many young men after the 1979 revolution, joined the Revolutionary Guard and fought against the invasion by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein that sparked an eight-year war.

Vahidi entered the Guard's nascent intelligence arm and soon was overseeing operations outside Iran. He gained the favour of powerful patrons, including Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a later president. Rafsanjani said in his autobiography that Vahidi was involved in the 1980s Iran-Contra scandal, in which the Reagan administration sold weapons to Tehran to free hostages held by Iranian-backed militants in Lebanon. The US later used the money from those sales to fund the Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Rafsanjani later intervened to protect Vahidi when then-Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini sought to prosecute members of the Guard who failed to stop an incursion by armed fighters from an Iranian exile group in the late 1980s.

Around this time, Vahidi took over the newly formed Quds, or Jerusalem, Force. The Quds Force created a network of proxy militant groups and allied governments around West Asia.

The Quds Force under Vahidi helped mastermind the 1994 bombing targeting Argentina's largest Jewish community centre, killing 85. American investigators also believe that under him, Iran organised the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, killing 19 US service members. Vahidi left the Quds Force in 1998.

In 2010, while he was the defence minister, the US imposed sanctions on him over alleged involvement in Iran's nuclear programme.

Vahidi's role makes reaching an accord with Iran that much more difficult for the US. Trump wants a single interlocutor in Iran for negotiations, but "the whole system has changed," said Hamidreza Azizi, an expert at the Middle East Institute.

"It is not a one-man show. Vahidi is one alongside others," Azizi said. "Some we know and some we don't know." —PTI

US indicates 'progress' in talks with Iran

Taiwan arm sale may be paused to ensure ammo stockpile

WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday there was "slight progress" during talks with Iran amid uncertainty as to whether Washington would resume its bombing campaign.

A report by Al Arabiya on Friday also claimed that a final draft of a possible agreement between the US and Iran could be announced within "hours" amid a diplomatic push from Pakistan where Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi extended his stay in Tehran to meet Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi while Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was also due to arrive.

Rubio's comment came after US President Donald Trump said he was holding off on a military strike on Iran because "serious negotiations" were underway, citing

comments from several Arab leaders.

Rubio said he didn't want to exaggerate the progress, saying there had been "a little bit of movement", even as Israeli strikes killed at least 10 people in Lebanon. He spoke ahead of a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Sweden, where thet are expected to discuss policing the Strait of Hormuz.

Still, major sticking points remain. Iran has effectively closed the Strait, a vital waterway for the shipment of oil, gas, fertiliser and other petroleum products. The US is blockading Iranian ports and has redirected 85 commercial vessels from mid-April through Monday, US Central Command said.

TAIWAN ARMS SALE PAUSED?

A Senate committee in Washington that some foreign military sales were being delayed to ensure the American military has enough munitions for the Iran war. Acting Navy Secretary Hung Cao said the pause of a USD 14 billion arms sale to Taiwan was aimed at ensuring the US military maintained adequate stockpiles for "Operation Epic Fury".

However, Taiwan hasn't been notified of any pause in the planned sale, presidential spokesperson Karen Kuo said.

Meanwhile, the US approved a modest USD 108 million arms sale to Ukraine that will help the country maintain and sustain its midrange air defence missile system. *—Agencies*

US sends 5,000 troops to Poland, miffing allies

WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

President Donald Trump on Thursday said the US will send an additional 5,000 troops to Poland after because of his ties with President Karol Nawrocki.

However, the move stirred confusion after Trump and his administration have been talking about reducing troops to Europe.

The US government said earlier it was reducing levels in Europe by about 5,000 troops, and US officials confirmed about 4,000 service members were no longer deploying to Poland. Trump had also stated that the US was withdrawing some 5,000 troops from Germany after Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the US was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership.

However, Trump posted on Truth Social that he was increasing troops because of Nawrocki's election. Trump had endorsed Nawrocki, but the elections were last year.

"It is confusing indeed, and not always easy to navigate," Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard told reporters at a meeting she was hosting of her NATO counterparts, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. US defence officials were also confused. "We just spent the better part of two weeks reacting to the first announcement. We don't know what this means."

NATO Chief Mark Rutte welcomed the moven, given the Poland-Russa border. *—PTI*

Want to help Cuba on humanitarian grounds: Trump on deploying carrier

WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

President Donald Trump on Thursday said the US wants to help Cuba on "humanitarian grounds", dismissing a question on whether the nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz was deployed to intimidate Havana.

"It's a failed country," Trump told reporters at the White House. "They don't have electricity, they don't have money, they don't have really anything. They don't have food. And we're going to help them along and we're going to help them because the people because number one."

Trump, who has frequently spoken about "taking" Cuba, made the comments after the US indicted former president Raul Castro, believed to be one of the most powerful figures in the Socialist country.

NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio indicated that Cuba could pose a "national security" threat to the US and the likelihood of a peaceful agreement was "not high".

"It's not nation building," he said, adding that Cuba was becoming a "failed state" because the governance system doesn't work. "Even if they had all the diesel in the world, they still wouldn't be able to generate energy because they they've stolen the money and haven't invested in their energy infrastructure." *—ANI*

US used half of its THAAD interceptors for Israel

The US launched more than 200 of its highly advanced and expensive Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) interceptors to defend Israel, the Washington Post reported. This was roughly half of the Pentagon's inventory. By contrast, Israel fired fewer than 100 of its Arrow interceptors and around 90 David's Sling interceptors, many against Houthis and Hezbollah.

US sanctions Lebanese lawmakers for Hezbollah

The US sanctioned a group of Lebanese parliamentarians and state security officials for their alleged ties to Hezbollah and seeking to preserve the Iranian-backed groups influence in Lebanon. This is the first time Washington has sanctioned sitting Lebanese state security officials. Notably, Hezbollah was an active political party in Lebanon until it was banned earlier this year.

Don may skip Trump Jr's wedding

Donald Trump said that he may skip his son Donald Trump Jr's wedding to socialite s Bettina Anderson, which will reportedly take place in the Bahamas over the upcoming Memorial Day weekend (25 May) as he "might get killed". The President said "it's going to be just a small little private affair, and I'm going to try and make it," but sounded unenthusiastic. "I have a thing called Iran and other things."

Congolese torch Ebola treatment site

BUNIA, 22 MAY

People set fire to an Ebola treatment centre in eastern Congo on Thursday after being stopped from retrieving the body of a local man, a senior police officer said. Aid workers fled the treatment centre in vehicles.

The attack reflects the challenges of health workers trying to curb a highly contagious rare Ebola virus, that the World Health Organisation has declared a public health emergency of international concern, with measures that might clash with local customs like burial rites.

The disease has been spreading for weeks in a region lacking in health facilities and where many people are on the move to escape armed conflicts. There is no available vaccine or medicine for the Bundibugyo strain responsible for the outbreak.

An official said later that calm had been restored and that aid teams were continuing their work at the centre.

The remains of the hospital beds in Rwampara, Congo, after the fire *—PTI*

Health workers and aid groups have said they need more supplies and staff to respond properly.

There are 148 suspected deaths and nearly 600 suspected cases, according to the United Nations. But the head of the WHO has said the outbreak is almost certainly much larger and spreading fast. On Thursday, the M23 rebel group that controls parts of eastern Congo reported that a person had died of the disease some 500 kilometres south of the outbreak's epicentre. *—PTI*

US flight diverted to Montreal over guidelines

TORONTO, 22 MAY

An Air France flight bound for Detroit, US, was diverted to Montreal, Canada, after a passenger from the Congo boarded a flight in Paris "in error" amid flight restrictions tied to the Ebola outbreak, US Customs and Border Protection said.

A spokesperson for the agency on Thursday said the passenger "should not have boarded" the plane on Wednesday due to US entry restrictions put in place to reduce the risk of Ebola spreading.

Homeland Security also said that as of Thursday all US-bound American citizens and permanent residents who have been in Congo, Uganda or South Sudan in the previous 21 days must only enter through Washington Dulles International Airport for enhanced screening. *—PTI*

Board of Peace urges UNSC to disarm Hamas

UNITED NATIONS, 22 MAY

Nickolay Mladenov, high representative of Trump's Board of Peace, that is tasked with overseeing the ceasefire in Gaza, urged the UN Security Council on Thursday to use "every means at its disposal" to press Hamas to disarm, warning that every act of violence in the Palestinian territory risks "unravelling" the agreement.

The choice before Hamas and Israel is either "a deteriorating status quo" or a new beginning for Palestinians waiting "in desperate conditions," he said. "There is no third option. And the people of Gaza should not be made to wait while some pretend that there is."

If nothing is done, he said, Gaza will remain divided.

Warning that Hamas may hold military and administrative control over 2 million people, Mladenov said: "Those

people are likely to remain trapped in the rubble, dependent on aid with no meaningful reconstruction, because reconstruction financing will not follow where weapons have not been laid down."

"The implementation cannot advance through Palestinian obligations alone," Mladenov said.

However, Hamas has rejected the Board of Peace's roadmap.

Trump created the Board of Peace after brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Israel killed at least 70,000 people in the Gaza Strip after years of bombardment. *—PTI*

Pak claims India releasing excess water, warns of floods in Punjab

LAHORE, 22 MAY

Pakistan's emergency services were on high alert on Friday after the Punjab province administration warned of a possible flood in Chenab River, claiming that India opened the spillway gates of the Salal Dam in Jammu and Kashmir.

Punjab Emergency Services Department Secretary Rizwan Naseer stated that the rescue services are on high alert between 21 and 30 May due to the possibility of increased water inflow from India. The Punjab Provincial Disaster Management Authority circulated a communication allegedly received from Indian authorities to relevant departments.

Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot district, Saba Asghar Ali, said: "The water level in the Chenab may rise by two to three metres due to the opening of the spillway gates of the dam by India." A high alert has been issued for the Marala Barrage, near Sialkot, and adjacent areas, especially Bajwat, she said.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) shared a letter from Indian officials with all relevant departments in the Punjab province.

The Chenab river was regulated under the Indus Water Treaty that India put in "abeyance" following the Pahalgam terror attack on 22 April last year. *—PTI*

A road near the fourth Tawi Bridge washes away following continuous heavy rains in Jammu and Kashmir *—ANI*

UK calls for witnesses on Prince Andrew's sexual misconduct

LONDON, 22 MAY

British police appealed for witnesses Friday as they sought to broaden their investigation into potential offenses by the former Prince Andrew, including sexual misconduct.

Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested on 19 February and held for hours as police questioned him about allegations linked to his friendship with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Thames Valley Police, who cover the area where Mountbatten-Windsor lived for years, renewed the appeal amid concern that the public believes they are only investigating allegations linked to the allegations that Mountbatten-Windsor leaked trade reports to Epstein when he served as the UK envoy to the US, when his misconduct in public office applies to a much broader list of offenses.

Thames Valley Police also issued an update on its inquiry into allegations that a woman was taken to a location in Windsor for sexual purposes in 2010. "Should she wish to report this to police it will be taken seriously and handled with care, sensitivity and respect for her privacy."

UK politics has been reeling under scandals after the US Justice Department released the tranches of 'Epstein Files'. *—PTI*

Pakistan to issue new coin for 75 years of China ties

ISLAMABAD, 22 MAY

Pakistan has announced the release of a special PKR 75 commemorative coin to mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations with China, continuing celebrations of their strategic partnership. The State Bank of Pakistan stated the coin will be available from 25 May at banking counters nationwide through counters of SBP Banking. Pakistan was the first Muslim country to establish diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1951, less than two years after China's founding. China is Pakistan's largest trading partner and major investor, notably through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the two countries have strategic ties. Both nations are marking the milestone, with Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif visiting China from 23 to 26 May. *—PTI*

23 terrorists killed in Pakistan's KP

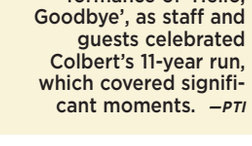
PESHAWAR, MAY 22

Pakistani security forces killed 23 terrorists during operations on Wednesday and Thursday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the military's media wing announced. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said troops carried out intelligence-based operations in Datta Khel, Spinwam, and Bannu, engaging terrorists in intense fire exchanges. A wanted militant, identified as Jan Meer alias Toor Saqib, was also killed, dealing a major blow to regional terrorist networks. Saqib was wanted for involvement in terror activities, including killing security personnel and civilians. Weapons, ammunition, explosives, and IEDs were recovered, and underground tunnels and bunkers were destroyed. Pakistan is intensifying efforts under its 'Azm-e-Istehkam' campaign. *—PTI*

Alberta to hold referendum on leaving Canada

TORONTO, 22 MAY

Alberta will hold a referendum in October on leaving Canada, but it won't be a vote on independence, said Premier Danielle Smith. She clarified, "I support Alberta remaining in Canada, and this is how I would vote on separation in a provincial referendum. It is the position of my government." The vote will ask if Albertans want to stay in Canada or take steps under the Constitution to hold a binding referendum on independence. Political analysts suggest Smith is proceeding cautiously, with some seeing the question as a message to the federal government. Opposition figures and federal officials have expressed ongoing support for national unity. *—PTI*



Colbert says bye to late night TV with McCartney

NEW YORK, 22 MAY

Stephen Colbert's final 'Late Show' featured Paul McCartney, who joined him on stage for a lively rendition of "Hello, Goodbye". Colbert reflected on creating over 1,800 episodes, saying, "The energy that you've given us, we sincerely need that to have done the best possible show for you for the last 11 years." The show included humorous moments, with McCartney sharing a photo of The Beatles. Colbert's monologue included jokes and appearances by guests like Bryan Cranston and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. The show ended with a performance of 'Hello, Goodbye', as staff and guests celebrated Colbert's 11-year run, which covered significant moments. *—PTI*

AMID RECORD FOOTFALL

Everest record-holder urges crowd limit on peak

KATHMANDU, 22 MAY

Renowned Mount Everest guide Kami Rita Sherpa, who this week scaled the peak a record 32nd time, urged authorities on Friday to limit climbers on the summit.

On Wednesday, 274 climbers reached the summit, the highest number on a single day from the Nepal side. 494 climbers have been issued permits by Nepal's mountaineering authorities and an equal number Sherpa guides are accompanying them.

The number of climbers making the ascent on the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) peak from the Nepalese side is higher this season because China has closed the alternate route from Tibet. Climbers only get a few windows of good weather to make their attempt.

—MAGANIFIC

Sherpa's closest competitor, Pasang Dawa Sherpa, scaled the peak for the 31st time on Friday, which was his second successful ascent this week.

They are two of many Sherpa guides whose expertise and skills are vital to the safety and success of foreign climbers aspiring to stand on top of the mountain. *—PTI*

TWO INDIANS DIE WHILE DESCENDING FROM EVEREST

Two Indian mountaineers, Arun Kumar Tiwari and Sandeep Are, who summited Mount Everest, have died while descending, an official said on Friday. The climbers were exhausted and could not be saved despite the best efforts of their guides, said Rishi Bhandari, secretary general of the Expedition Operators Association of Nepal. It appears that Are summited on Wednesday and Tiwari on Thursday around 5.30 pm. Are died on Thursday and it is not clear when Tiwari passed away.

—FREEPIK

Gold falls to ₹1.64 lakh/10g as Iran talks continue

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Gold prices retreated by Rs 600 to Rs 1.64 lakh per 10 grams on Friday as tentative progress in US-Iran negotiations reduced precious metals buying, though unresolved tensions around the Strait of Hormuz kept traders cautious. The volatility of the Indian rupee and movements in crude oil prices have also affected gold prices, said Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk.

However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 2,71,000 per kg in the bullion market. Globally, spot gold fell marginally lower to USD 4,522.32 per ounce, while silver slipped 1 per cent to USD 75.87 per ounce. Meanwhile, Washington warned that shipping through Hormuz must remain toll-free, keeping investors cautious despite signs of progress in US-Iran talks. *—PTI*

Maruti Suzuki to hike prices by up to ₹30,000

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Maruti Suzuki announced it will increase prices across its vehicle portfolio by up to Rs 30,000 starting June 2026, citing rising input costs and inflation. In an exchange filing, the company said efforts to reduce expenses through cost-saving measures had been insufficient. "The sustained increase in input costs has led us to decide on the price hike," the company stated. Despite ongoing cost reduction initiatives, inflationary pressures have compelled the company to pass some costs to consumers. The exact increase will vary by model, with prices for models like the Alto K10, S-Presso, and Celerio ranging from Rs 3.50 lakh to Rs 24.97 lakh. Notably, the move applies across all vehicle models from June 2026. *—PTI*

Rs 100/$ just a number: Ex-NITI Aayog head to RBI

'Let the rupee depreciate or India's reserves will bleed out'

Chair of Finance Commission Arvind Panagariya *-PTI*

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

In a message to RBI on X, Arvind Panagariya, the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission and Former Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, said.

said that the RBI needs to look past specific exchange rate milestones when navigating currency fluctuations.

"Dear @RBI: Do not let the psychology of Rs 100 per dollar determine your policy. 100 is just a number, like 99 and 101. Whether the oil shortage is short-lived or long-lived, the right response at this moment is to let the rupee depreciate," Panagariya stated.

The RBI should not let the psychological barrier of Rs 100 per dollar dictate its monetary strategy, and the right approach as per current conditions is to allow the Rupee to weaken, Panagariya said.

He said that if the disruption in oil markets remains , the currency will eventually find its equilibrium.

"Oil shortage is temporary. In this case, the rupee will depreciate now but will recover once the oil import bill shrinks and foreign capital seeks India to take advantage of the cheap rupee," Panagariya added.

Conversely, Panagariya warned against deploying forex reserves or altering interest structures to artificially maintain the value of the Rupee if global supply challenges persist.

"The oil shortage may last long. Anything other than depreciation will be a losing proposition. Trying to defend the rupee will bleed our forex reserves," he said.

Addressing macroeconomic concerns that the country are significantly stronger than during past times of external vulnerability.

Panagariya also expressed reservations regarding specialised debt instruments targeted at overseas investors to stabilise the exchange rate.

At the time of filing this report, the rupee stood at 96.19 agsint the US dollar. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 63 paise to close at 95.73

The rupee rose for the second straight session on Friday, closing 63 paise higher at 95.73 against the US dollar, supported by softening crude oil prices and suspected Reserve Bank intervention.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.30, touched an intraday high of 95.30 and a low of 95.68 before settling at 95.73 (provisional).

On Thursday, it had

rebounded 50 paise from its all-time closing low to settle at 96.36. Forex traders said the rupee found support after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio signalled progress in diplomatic talks over Iran, while gains in domestic equities and a fall in US treasury yields added to the currency's strength.

Analysts expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias given uncertainty over US-Iran tensions, though optimism over a peace deal and easing crude prices may limit losses.Foreign Institutional Investors sold equities worth Rs 1,891.21 crore on a net basis on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the government is considering steps to contain the widening account deficit amid a weakening rupee.

Sahil Kapoor, Head of Products and Market Strategist, SVP, DSP Mutual Fund, in a research note, said it is the time to buy rupee assets and not bet against them. *-—PTI*

THREE-DAY WINDOW

RBI injects ₹81,590 cr liquidity through VRR auction

MUMBAI, 22 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday injected Rs 81,590 crore of transient liquidity into the banking system through a three-day variable repo rate (VRR) auction.

Transient liquidity refers to temporary cash-flow fluctuations in a financial or banking system, while a Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction is a monetary tool used by the RBI to inject short-term liquidity into the banking system.

In a release, the RBI said the funds were infused at a 5.26 per cent cut-off rate.

The demand for funds remained below the notified amount of Rs 1 lakh crore despite a falling liquidity surplus in the banking system.

However, demand from banks was higher in Friday's auction than in the previous one held on 21 May.

Currently, the liquidity in the banking system is estimated to be in surplus of around Rs 58,876.29 crore as on 21 May, as compared to Rs 1.51 lakh crore as on 20 May.

The tightness in the liquidity surplus has led to a sharp uptick in the overnight call money rates.

Money market experts anticipate that the RBI would announce another VRR auction to manage evolving liquidity conditions.

INDIA'S OUTLOOK CLOUDED BY SUPPLY-PRESSURES: RBI

While the global economy remained shadowed by uncertainties in West Asia, an article in the Bulletin said domestic economic activity exhibited resilience in April.

India's near-term outlook is somewhat clouded by supply-side pressures, and the spillover impact of the West Asia conflict on domestic inflation needs to be monitored, according to the RBI Bulletin.

India's trade is being reshaped by the evolving geopolitical situation. Shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, which had declined in March, recovered in April 2026.

Economic activity showed a mixed trend the same month, as reflected in high-frequency indicators including fuel consumption, trade, and logistics. *—PTI*

LIC SHARES UP NEARLY 5% POST Q4

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Shares of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Friday climbed nearly 5 per cent after the firm on Thursday posted a 23 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 23,420 crore in the March quarter, helped return on investment.

The stock rallied 4.78 per cent to INR 839 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock jumped 4.84 per cent to INR 839.

The income of the insurer rose to INR 2,53,592 crore from INR 2,22,805 crore in the same period of the preceding fiscal year, LIC said in a regulatory filing.

The company's income from

- Stocks rallied 4.78 per cent to INR 839 on the BSE. At NSE, it jumped 4.84 per cent.

first-year premium also improved to Rs 12,970 crore and income from renewal premiums in the period increased to Rs 81,933 cr. *—PTI*

Stock markets rebound, led by banks, positive global trends

MUMBAI, 22 MAY

Stock markets recovered on Friday, Sensex rised 232 points, driven by buying in blue-chip banking stocks amid positive global cues.

Sensex settled at 75,415.35. During the day, it surged 627.61 points, or 0.83 per cent, to 75,810.97. Similarly, Nifty edged higher by 64.60 points or 0.27 per cent to end at 23,719.30.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Trent, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Hindustan

Unilever, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were the major winners. While Sun Pharma, ITC, Power Grid and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.

Hopes of progress in the US-Iran peace negotiations added to markets' optimism, analysts said.

Globally, Europe were trading in positive territory. US markets ended higher on Thursday.

On the weekly front, the BSE climbed 177.36 points, or 0.23 per cent. Nifty went up by 75.8 points, or 0.32 per cent. Brent crude climbed 2.3 per cent to USD 104.7 per barrel. *—PTI*

Vedanta Ltd arm faces Rs 127 cr penalty: SC

NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Vedanta Ltd has said that its subsidiary Talwandi Sabo Power Ltd (TSPL) has been held liable to pay approximately INR 127 crore to Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd (PSPCL) following a Supreme Court judgment.

The apex court has upheld the penalty on TSPL for misdeclaration of availability for January 2017 in terms of the Grid Code, along with the applicable Late Payment Surcharge.

Talwandi Sabo Power Ltd is a 1,980 MW super-critical coal-based thermal power plant located at Banawala in Punjab.

TSPL supplies 100 per cent of its generated power to Punjab State Power Corporation, playing a critical role, supporting 35 per cent of Punjab's energy through large-scale electricity generation. The project was awarded to Vedanta under a Build-Own-Operate model. *—PTI*

Nara Lokesh inaugurates 600MW solar projects in Andhra

JAMMALAMADUGU, 22 MAY

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh inaugurated SAEL Limited's 600MW solar projects in Kadapa district, a significant milestone for the state's renewable energy sector. The projects, SAEL Solar MHP1 and MHP2, were completed in 11 months with an investment of nearly Rs 3,000 crore. Lokesh said, "The commissioning of these projects reflects Andhra Pradesh's commitment to fast-paced industrial growth and clean energy expansion."

- The projects will supply electricity to the national grid under a 25-year agreement, reducing 11 lakh tonnes of CO2 annually.

Covering over 2,400 acres, the facilities include two 300 MW plants, which began operations earlier this year. Using over 12 lakh TOPCon bifacial modules, mainly assembled in Punjab and Rajasthan, the projects will supply electricity to the national grid under a 25-year agreement, reducing 11 lakh tonnes of CO2 annually. They will also create income opportunities for farmers through land leases up to 25 years.

Developed under SAEL's integrated framework, the projects received support from the Andhra Pradesh government for approvals, land, and grid access. The inauguration aligns with the state's 2024 Clean Energy Policy, targeting Rs 10 lakh crore investments in renewables, storage, green hydrogen, and manufacturing. *—PTI*

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh inaugurated SAEL Ltd's 600MW solar projects in Kadapa district *-x*

GAIL's FY26 profit falls 38%

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

GAIL (India) Limited on Thursday reported a 38 per cent decline in its standalone Profit After Tax (PAT) to Rs 6,968 crore for the financial year, amid a volatility in energy markets.

According to the company's financial results, Revenue from operations rose marginally to Rs 1,38,697 crore in FY26 from Rs 1,37,288 crore in the FY25. Earings for FY26 stood at INR 13,119 crore, while Profit Before Tax (PBT) declined to INR 8,964 crore.

"The year was marked by a challenging & complex global backdrop, beginning with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and evolving geopolitical developments including the onset of the West Asian crisis towards the later part of the year," GAIL Chairman and Managing Director Deepak Gupta said.

The company said its board has recommended a final dividend of Rs 0.50 per equity share for FY26, subject to shareholder approval. This is in addition to the interim dividend of INR 5 per share already paid during the year.

GAIL incurred a capital expenditure of Rs 9,594 crore in FY26, mainly towards pipeline infrastructure, petrochemical projects and operational capex and equity contributions to joint ventures and subsidiaries. *—ANI*

RELIANCE POWER POSTS ₹494 CR LOSS

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Reliance Power reported a net loss of Rs 494 crore in the quarter. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 125.57 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last financial year.

Total income declined to Rs 1,946.33 crore during the quarter under review from Rs 2,065.64 crore in the year-ago period.

The company reported a loss of Rs 336.89 crore for fiscal 2025-26, compared to a net profit of Rs 2,947.83 crore in 2024-25.

Total income dipped to Rs 7,988.52 crore in FY26 from Rs 8,257.04 crore in the previous fiscal.

The board approved a proposal for raising Rs 6,000 crore through issue of equity shares, equity-linked instruments.

The board also approved a proposal for the issue of secured/unsecured, debentures of Rs 3,000 crore, in one or more tranches/series. *—PTI*

SEBI mulls revamp of pre-open price discovery

MUMBAI, 22 MAY

SEBI has proposed overhauling the price discovery mechanism for IPOs and re-listed companies during pre-open call auction sessions. A consultation paper released on Thursday aims to fix current frameworks that distort initial trading values.

The consultation paper states that "representations have been received by SEBI that the dummy price band and the mechanism for base price in case of re-listed scrips are leading to artificially suppressed price discovery".

This suppression has historically triggered buying pressure in the normal trading market, causing affected shares to repeatedly hit upper circuits and restrictive surveillance measures.

Under the current system, if a company's trading suspension is revoked after more than a year, its base price can default to a meagre Rs 10 because it relies on the lower of face value or historic book value. SEBI's new proposal states that suspension is revoked within six months, and the stock's latest closing price will apply.

SEBI also plans to automate and relax restrictions on flexible dummy price band execution, allowing automated 10 per cent extensions to function dynamically even during the random closure window, preventing system freezes.

To validate true market liquidity, a call auction session will be deemed successful only if it registers orders from at least five unique, PAN-verified buyers and sellers.

Public and market stakeholders have been invited to submit their comments on these structural changes by 11 June. *—ANI*

REPORT FINDS

'Power cuts, grid stress may prevent AI data centre bubble'

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

India's rapidly expanding AI-driven data centre sector is unlikely to face an infrastructure bubble despite aggressive investment, as power shortages, land constraints and regulations are restricting oversupply, says a report by Cushman & Wakefield.

The report said concerns around "AI data centre bubble" are growing globally... but current market conditions do not point towards reckless overbuilding.

The demand for data capacity continues to exceed available supply globally, with extremely low vacancy levels and strong pre-leas

The report noted that India is increasingly becoming part of this global AI infrastructure expansion cycle, with hyperscalers scaling up investments in multiple cities.

However, the report said the biggest challenge for India will be getting sufficient electricity and infrastructure support for future AI demand. *—ANI*

SpaceX reports $4.27B net loss after IPO filing

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

SpaceX recorded a net loss of USD 4.27 billion in the first quarter of 2026, up from USD 528 million in Q1 last year.

The expanding bottom-line deficit occurred despite top-line growth during the quarter. Revenue growth was driven by a USD 782 million boost in Connectivity from Starlink and a USD 91 million gain from X, offset by a USD 246 million in the Space segment.

However, these gains were outpaced by operational costs, of USD 6.63 billion causing the USD 4.27 billion net loss. This follows SpaceX's IPO filing. Chairman and CEO Elon Musk is expected to become the world's first trillionaire through the IPO. *—ANI*

Starship launch scrubbed

CAPE CANAVERAL, 22 MAY

SpaceX came within 30 seconds of launching its newest and biggest Starship on a test flight from Texas on Thursday before a cascade of problems halted the countdown of the 407-foot (124-metre) rocket.

SpaceX CEO Elon Musk attributed the abort to a hydraulic pin failing to retract, adding that another attempt could be made on Friday if the issue is resolved quickly. It will be the 12th test flight.

The attempt came a day after Musk announced SpaceX would go public. NASA is counting on Starship to land astronauts on the moon within years. *—PTI*

PTI

Urs tied second after opening round in Morocco

RABAT, 22 MAY

Indian golfer, Pranavi Urs, carded 3-under 70 to occupy tied second place with nine other players on the first day of the Lalla Meryem Cup here.

The other Indian players in the field had modest starts as Avani Prashanth and Diksha carded rounds of 2-over 75 to be T-61, while Hitaashee carded 5-over 78 to be placed T-99.

Australian Kelsey Bennet leads the field by two strokes after carding a 5-under 68 in her opening round. Pranavi began her first round on the back nine and made an early birdie on the 11th hole and made par on the next seven holes to head into the front nine with a score of 1-under par.

On the front nine, Pranavi made three consecutive birdies on the first, second and third holes before dropping a shot on the fourth with a bogey. Par on the last five holes allowed the 23-year-old to finish the day tied for second place.—*PTI*

Ivashka to face Biryukov in SMK Memorial Open final

BENGALURU, 22 MAY

Seasoned Ilya Ivashka of Belarus remained composed under pressure to overcome Britain's third seed Hamish Stewart to enter the men's singles final of the SM Krishna Memorial Open here on Friday.

Ivashka won 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 in a gripping semifinal to set up a summit clash with fourth seed Petr Biryukov, who outlasted second seed Alastair Grey 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) in the other last four match. Meanwhile, Indian interest remained alive in the doubles as Adil Kalyanpur and Mukund Sasikumar continued their impressive run, defeating second seeds Charles Barry of Ireland and Joshua Charlton of Australia 6-4, 6-3 to advance to the final.—*PTI*

Guardiola to leave Manchester City after season

MANCHESTER, 22 MAY

Pep Guardiola confirmed what Manchester City fans had been fearing. The club's most successful manager is leaving, bringing to a close a trophy-laden, 10-year spell in which he established City as one of the major forces in Europe and changed the face of English soccer. Guardiola, who had a further year left on his City contract, will take charge of his final game against Aston Villa in the Premier League on Sunday.

"Don't ask me the reasons I'm leaving. There is no reason, but deep inside, I know it's my time," Guardiola said.—*PTI*

PTI

PCB removes long-serving physio, Cliffe Deacon

LAHORE, 22 MAY

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has parted ways with long-serving team physiotherapist Cliffe Deacon, appointing Iftikhar in his place for the upcoming home ODI series against Australia. Deacon, a South African who had been with the national side since 2017, apparently did not return with the Test squad from Bangladesh.

On Friday, the PCB named Iftikhar (one name given by PCB) as the physiotherapist for the Australia series, though it did not officially state the reasons behind Deacon's exit.

Sources claim his tenure came to a close over recurring injury issues among players.—*PTI*

HC pulls up WFI over decision to declare Vinesh ineligible

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Friday pulled up the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for its decision to declare celebrated grappler Vinesh Phogat "ineligible" to participate in domestic events, and said it would pass an order on whether she can join the upcoming Asian Games selection trials.A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia observed that the WFI was denying the Olympian the opportunity to compete in the trials despite clearance from the international body, and the federation's departure from the earlier practice of permitting the participation of reputed athletes based on past performance "speaks volumes".

It stated that Phogat, who is seeking her return from a maternity break, is a wrestler of international repute and should not be "denounced" for becoming a mother.The bench emphasised that motherhood is celebrated in the country, and the federation should not act with "vengeance".

Even as the WFI counsel clarified that the selection criteria are not to the exclusion of new mothers and the issue in the present case arose from Phogat's decision to retire, the court remarked that the consequence of the WFI policy was that she had been excluded. Had she not become a mother, she would have participated and become eligible, the court said, adding that an athlete should concentrate on preparations, not litigation.

The Centre's counsel submitted that if Phogat succeeds in the trials, the framework provided by the Sports Authority of India permits relaxation of the eligibility criteria to pave the way for her participation in the Asian Games. The criteria for her participation in the selection trials, however, have to be relaxed by the WFI, the lawyer clarified. He further said the trials could be conducted under the supervision of a technical team of WFI in the presence of independent observers nominated by the Centre and the Indian Olympic Association, and the entire exercise would be videographed. The WFI counsel requested the court to list the matter on Monday and ask Phogat to make a representation to the federation."We will pass orders," the bench, however, said.The court was hearing Phogat's appeal against a single-judge's order of 18 May refusing her immediate relief on the issue of her participation in the selection trials on May 30-31 for this year's Asian Games despite being declared "ineligible" by the WFI. —*PTI*

PBKS seek to keep fading playoff hopes alive against LSG

Punjab first need to rediscover its form across departments

LUCKNOW, 22 MAY

Punjab Kings will need something spectacular to arrest a disastrous slide and keep their fading playoff hopes alive when they take on already-eliminated Lucknow Super Giants in their IPL clash here on Saturday.

Punjab's campaign has unravelled dramatically since their record 265-run chase against Delhi Capitals on April 25.

From remaining unbeaten till the midway stage and looking like genuine title contenders with six wins in seven matches, the last season's runners-up have crashed to six successive defeats, leaving their playoff hopes hanging by a thread.

Now placed fifth, Punjab not only need to beat LSG in their final league game here on Saturday but also depends on Sunday's double headers (MI vs RR and KKR vs DC) to earn a place in the playoff.

The Shreyas Iyer-led side would hope both the Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders lose their respective matches.

A Rajasthan Royals win over Mumbai would officially end Punjab's hopes, while a KKR victory over Delhi Capitals could bring net run rate into play.

Punjab's campaign has unravelled dramatically since their record 265-run chase against Delhi Capitals -*PTI*

PBKS VS LSG @ Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow.
7.30 pm IST

At present, PBKS hold a slight edge in NRR over KKR.

But before permutations come into the picture, Punjab first need to rediscover its form after a prolonged slump that has exposed flaws across departments.

CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad fined for slow over-rate

Chennai Super Kings captain Ruturaj Gaikwad has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during their IPL match against the Gujarat Titans.

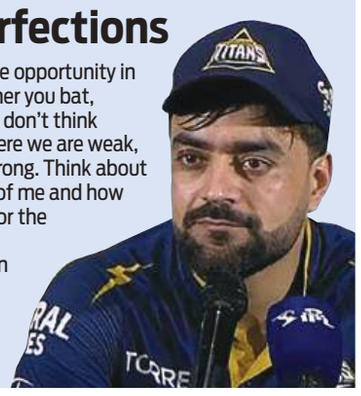
Gujarat Titans sealed a top-two finish in the IPL playoffs with a commanding 89-run victory over Chennai Super Kings in their final league match here on Thursday.

"As this was his team's second offence (first offence in Match 18) of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Gaikwad was fined INR 24 lakhs," said an IPL media advisory issued on Friday. —*PTI*

Rashid says GT is thriving by not dwelling on imperfections

Aware of the scrutiny around the Gujarat Titans' middle order, star spinner Rashid Khan said the side has succeeded this season by not dwelling on imperfections but trusting players to deliver in different situations, and adapting quickly to conditions. GT registered a massive 89-run win over Chennai Super Kings in their last league match on Thursday to take the top two positions in the points table.

"I think every team has those little areas to improve and has some areas very strong. You can't be a complete 100% perfect team. Doesn't matter how good a player you will have ... throughout the tournament, there has been lots of discussion about our middle order and things like that, but I feel everyone is stepping up," he said. "Everyone is taking the responsibility, and I feel like that's so important. If you keep thinking about those 10% or 15%, you are not accurate; it's going to affect the rest of 70-75 or 80%. "For us, the thing is that we just keep it simple. Whoever the opposition is, how are we going to be more impactful, whoever gets the opportunity in the middle? Either you bat, bowl or field. So don't think much about where we are weak, where we are strong. Think about what is in front of me and how I can do better for the team." Rashid heaped praise on the bowlers for their consistent effort this season.



AFTER DRAMATIC 2025-26 SEASON FINISH

All India Football Federation President Kalyan Chaubey - *PTI*

Chaubey assures full-fledged ISL next edition

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

Marred by controversy in the build-up, the curtailed Indian Super League made a dramatic end with East Bengal claiming the title, and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Kalyan Chaubey assured on Friday that the tournament would return in a full-fledged format next season.

Twenty-two years after their last national league triumph, East Bengal finally ended their long wait for glory by defeating Inter Kashi 2-1 in a thrilling ISL 2025-26 finale at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan here Thursday night.

"Of course, we will see a full-fledged ISL next season," Chaubey told reporters after the match.

Mohammed Rashid emerged as the unlikely hero with a decisive 72nd-minute strike after league top-scorer Youssef Ezzejjari had cancelled out Alfred Planas' early goal soon after the break.

The win helped East Bengal finish on top with 26 points from 13 matches, edging Mohun Bagan Super Giant on superior goal difference after both Kolkata giants ended level on points.

Hailing the rivalry between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, Chaubey said: "Whenever there is competition, it is always healthy for football. The Kolkata derby between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal is among the biggest rivalries in world football.

Will Oscar Bruzon leave East Bengal?

After guiding East Bengal to its first national league title in 22 years, coach Oscar Bruzon has hinted that he may not leave the club and hold discussions with the management next month about the future of the Indian Super League.

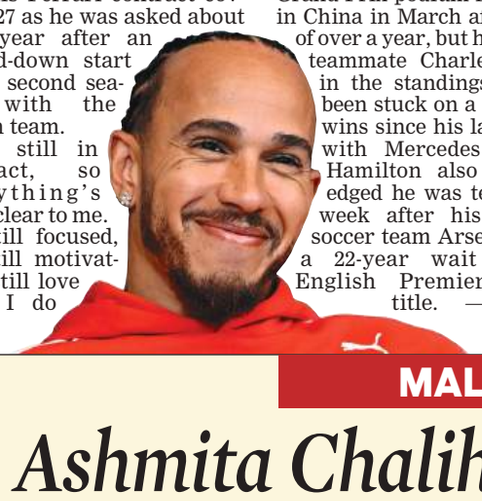
East Bengal came from behind to defeat Inter Kashi 2-1 in a dramatic ISL finale here on Thursday, with the victory helping it finish top of the table with 26 points from 13 matches, ahead of Mohun Bagan on superior goal difference (19-14).

"Regarding my future, I will say the same thing that I've been saying throughout the season I will not make any move till June," Bruzon said at the post-match media interaction. —*PTI*

Retirement is not even on my mind: Hamilton

MONTREAL, 22 MAY

Lewis Hamilton has pushed back against what he calls people "trying to retire me" and insists he'll be staying in Formula 1 for "quite some time" to come. Retirement is not even on my mind. The 41-year-old seven-time F1 champion appeared to confirm that his Ferrari contract covers 2027 as he was asked about next year after an up-and-down start to his second season with the Italian team.



"I'm still in contract, so everything's 100% clear to me. I'm still focused, I'm still motivated, I still love what I do with all my heart, and I'm going to be here for quite some time, so get used to it," he said."There are a lot of people who are trying to retire me, and that's not even on my mind. I'm already thinking of what will be next and planning for the next five years. But yeah, I still plan to be here for some time." Hamilton earned his first Grand Prix podium for Ferrari in China in March after a wait of over a year, but he's behind teammate Charles Leclerc in the standings and has been stuck on a record 105 wins since his last victory with Mercedes in 2024. Hamilton also acknowledged he was tearful this week after his boyhood soccer team Arsenal ended a 22-year wait for the English Premier League title. —*Agencies*

FIFA WC 2026: ENGLAND LEAVE OUT FODEN AND COLE

LONDON, 22 MAY

England will head to next month's World Cup without several familiar faces after midfielders Phil Foden and Cole Palmer and defender Trent Alexander-Arnold all missed the cut for manager Thomas Tuchel's 26-man squad on Friday.

It has now been 60 years since England last won the FIFA World Cup. In the intervening years, they have twice reached the semi-finals, in 1990 and 2018. But their victory on home soil in 1966 remains their sole triumph. England has also had a number of recent near misses in the European Championship, losing the final of both Euro 2020 and Euro 2024. So, only silverware will satisfy the success-starved supporters of the Three Lions. —*Agencies*

AHEAD OF THE WORLD CUP 2026

A large statue of soccer great Pele was unveiled Thursday in the Mexican city to commemorate his achievements. The 9.5-meter-tall statue is located in a public square called Plaza Brazil outside the Jalisco Stadium -*X/@JALISCO*

MALAYSIA MASTERS

Ashmita Chaliha's solo run ends in QF

KUALA LUMPUR, 22 MAY

Indian shuttler Ashmita Chaliha's campaign at the Malaysia Masters came to an end after she lost to former European Games champion Line Kjaersfeldt of Denmark in the women's singles quarterfinals here on Friday. With Chaliha's exit, India's challenge also concluded at the BWF Super 500 tournament.

Chaliha, 71st in the badminton rankings, won the opening game but eventually went down against the 23rd-ranked opponent 23-21, 18-21, 11-21 in 61 minutes.

The Indian youngster started strong, commanding an 11-6 lead at the mid-game interval. Despite a fierce comeback from the 23rd-ranked Dane, who levelled the score at 17-all, Chaliha held her nerve to convert her third game point and take the first game 23-21.

Chaliha looked strong for a straight-games victory after racing to a 10-5 lead early in the second game. However, Kjaersfeldt flipped the momentum, closing the gap to 11-10 at the break. Post resumption, the Dane levelled the score at 13-all. She then broke away with a four-point streak to lead 18-15 and ultimately took the game 21-18, forcing a decider.

The final game started on an even note at 4-4 before Kjaersfeldt seized complete control, racing to a 13-6 lead. Chaliha was unable to recover, and Kjaersfeldt comfortably wrapped up the match by taking the decider 21-11, which ended India's campaign in Kuala Lumpur.

The rest of the Indian contingent bowed out in their respective matches on Thursday. Malvika bowed out in the second round after a loss to former European Games champion Kjaersfeldt of Denmark on Thursday.

Devika Sihag also exited the womenâ ™s singles in the second round after a 21-16, 21-13 defeat to former Olympic champion and top seed Chinese Chen Yufei. —*PTI*

GENEVA OPEN: BHAMBRI-VENUS DUO ENTERS MEN'S DOUBLES FINAL

GENEVA, 22 MAY

India's Yuki Bhambri locked his first ATP final of the season when the Indian and his New Zealand partner Michael Venus advanced to the men's doubles title clash of the Geneva Open with a straight-set win over the Czech pair Petr Rikl and Adam Pavlasek here on Friday.

The Indo-Kiwi duo, seeded third, registered a 7-5, 6-3 victory in the semifinal.

Bhambri and Venus dominated the crucial points and maintained pressure with consistent serving to close out the match in one hour and 12 minutes.

They will now face the Romain Arneodo and Marc Polmans in the title clash after their 7-6(4) 6-2 win over Constantin Frantzen and Robin Haase in the other semi-final. —*PTI*